Commentary

Volume Fifty-nine, Number Five, May 1975

VIETNAM: The Final Reckoning
ROBERT W. TUCKER

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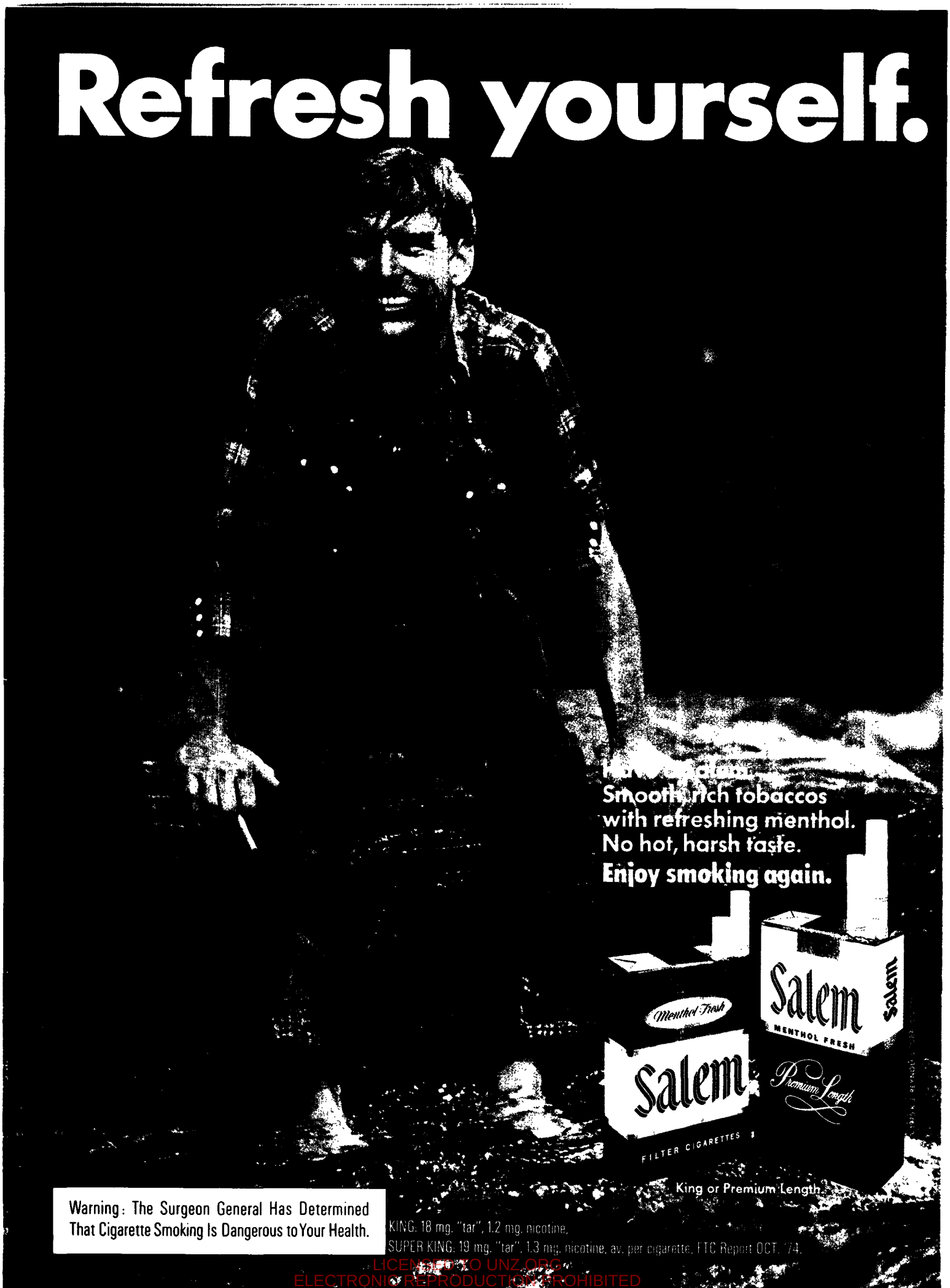

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LANDMARK BRIEFS AND ARGUMENTS OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES: CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

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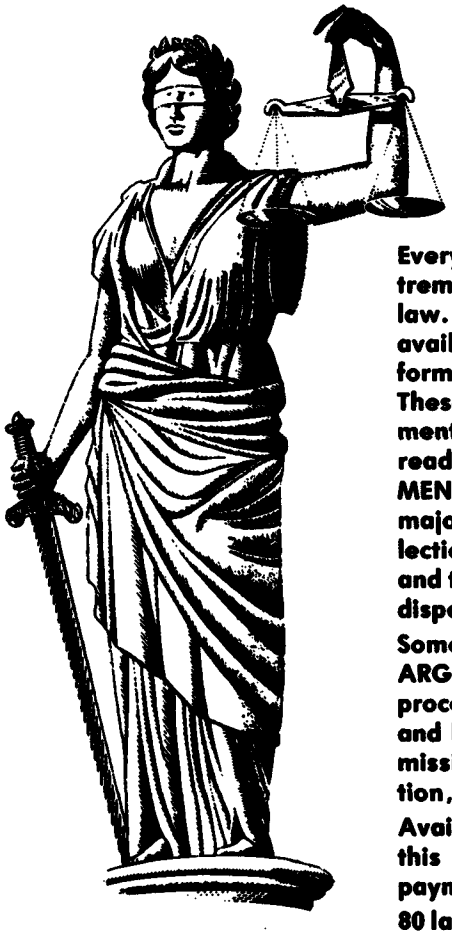

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Letters from Readers

The Palestinians

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In most public discussions during recent years, the word "Palestinian" has been applied solely to the inhabitants of the refugee camps, the guerrillas, and the PLO, with its associated organizations. In "The Palestinians and the PLO" [January], Bernard Lewis corrects this prevailing error by describing Palestinians other than the inhabitants of the camps and by noting that there are in fact three, not one or two, claimants to the position of representative of the Palestinians. His summary of the views held by the three claimants provides information where ignorance prevails in the cases of the Jordanian monarchy and of the local leadership, and corrects seriously defective common belief in the case of the PLO. Equally enlightening and perceptive is the treatment of possible solutions to the problem of the Palestinians, the importance of external influences (the great powers, oil, and the Arab states), and the concluding assessment of the current situation. In general, Mr. Lewis's description of the situation and assessment of the possible consequences seem unexceptionable to me. There are, however, some significant points about which I think it is possible to differ.

Palestinian Arabs engaged in political activity as Palestinians well before 1948, and it is erroneous to say that "the emergence of a distinctive Palestinian entity is . . . a product of the last decades." The problem of bringing together the disparate Arab territories with their local elites was recognized even by the pre-1914 Arab nationalists. After the imposition of the Mandates in 1920, pan-Arab activities declined everywhere as the local leaderships concentrated on gaining independence from the mandatory powers. When pan-Arab activity revived in the 1930's, it was soon agreed that each Arab territory must first establish an independent national government before Arab union could be achieved. Throughout the period of the Mandate, the Palestinian Arabs consistently worked for the establishment of a national, i.e., Arab, government in Palestine. The question is related to a theme which has recurred with some frequency in recent years, namely that the Palestinians cannot claim national rights since they are not a nation. The notion is used by Mr. Lewis in his section on the decline of pan-Arabism, where it is stated that the Arabs have become aware that pan-Arabism weakens the Arab case. The argument that the Palestinians, being Arabs, cannot claim to have been displaced from their national territory, has appeared from time to time in English. It has not been discussed very often in Arabic, and I doubt that many Arabs consider it a problem. The universal rule with nationalisms has been that no part of the national territory can be renounced. Arabs are no exception to the rule. The Arab goal remains what it has been since the 1920's: an independent Arab Palestine as part of the Arab nation.

For most Palestinian and other Arabs there has not been any irreconcilable opposition between Palestinianism and Arabism. I make the point only because in recent discussion proponents of contradictory views have laid stress on the Palestinians as opposed to the Arabs. Greater precision is necessary. Similar exactitude is required in assessing the general connections between the Palestinians and pan-Arabism.

In Mr. Lewis's treatment, the consequences of the decline of pan-Arabism are obscure. Does the dampening of the Palestinians' pan-Arab enthusiasm mean that they are now willing to reach agreement with the state of Israel? Mr. Lewis apparently does not think so. Of all the Palestinians, he finds signs of such willingness only among some local leaders in the occupied areas, but he admits that they trim their sails to the PLO wind. Palestinians, within or without the PLO, are not likely to make public renunciation of their claim to the whole of Palestine, and they will surely continue to insist that the liberation of Palestine is the prime goal of pan-Arabism. Does the decline of pan-Arabism mean that the Arab governments are about to abandon the goal of an Arab Palestine? Perhaps no one can say anything more precise than maybe so, maybe not. I doubt that I can attain greater precision or clarity than Mr. Lewis

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has, but a different statement may be of use.

Since 1938, no Arab capital from Cairo to Baghdad and Riyadh has felt itself able to turn its back on Arab causes, most notably Palestine. They have differed, sometimes bitterly, and each has usually approached every problem with a view to gaining as much as possible at as little cost as possible, but none has disclaimed the problem. Egypt's entry into pan-Arabism was largely motivated by the Egyptian perception that pan-Arabism was important to the great Egyptian national goal of the time, the termination of the British connection. Nevertheless, after Egypt achieved that goal in 1954, the Egyptian government became even more the pan-Arab hero. In 1949-50, Egyptian officials could speak through the Arabic press concerning the limitations on Egypt's pan-Arabism and a few eminent politicians could openly argue for Egypt's break with pan-Arabism, but public discussion ceased in 1950. Today, many Egyptians question the value of pan-Arabism, just as many Arabs consider the liberation of Palestine impossible in the short run and too expensive in the long run, but there has been no public debate, no attempt to make these views policy. Since late 1970 the Egyptian government in private diplomacy has committed itself to peace with Israel and President Sadat has on occasion expressed to American journalists his willingness to sign a peace treaty. In contacts with diplomats and in interviews for American consumption, however, the conclusion of a treaty is carefully tied to such formulas as "the maintenance of Palestinian rights." In the Arabic media until 1974, there was never a mention of a peace treaty. Instead, the sole stated goals were the recovery of occupied Arab territories and the protection of the rights of the Palestinians. Very recently, in 1974, Egyptian officials have stated in the Arabic press that Egypt is willing to sign a peace treaty with Israel, but the old conditions have not been removed. The peace will not include diplomatic, commercial, or other relations with Israel, and the emphasis is upon "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people."

Obviously, the Egyptian government does not feel that the time has arrived for completely plain speaking to its constituency. That Arabs are in fact considering and discussing a peace settlement is equally obvious. Since 1970, in talks with UN officials and in statements to the foreign media, Egyptian officials have stated that Egypt will sign a peace treaty. Never before 1970 had this happened. The problem is that to the Arabs Egypt explains its activity as being in no way prejudicial to Palestinian rights. The Egyptians are in effect saying to the Arabs, let us recover the occupied territories, which can be achieved now by diplomacy, whereas the liberation of Palestine is not realizable except in thirty or forty years, and the recovery of the occupied territories will not prejudice Palestinian rights. The Egyptians also appear to be saying something else to the Arabs which is also new, namely, that the restoration of Palestinian rights depends upon the Palestinians, that it will be up to the Palestinians, not Egypt, to regain Palestine in the future. It may be for this reason that Egypt has worked since early 1971 to persuade the PLO to accept the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. The Egyptians may even be giving the PLO some advice on Palestinian rights, for, although Egypt officially leaves the definition of these rights to the PLO, Egyptian officials have also hinted that "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people" are defined in the 1947 partition resolution and in the UN resolutions concerning Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees.

It may be that some important Palestinians have begun to face the realities as the Egyptians see them. Egyptian policy has been strongly criticized, notably by the PLO, precisely on the ground that it meant acceptance of the existence of Israel and abandonment of Palestine. Thus the question has been debated indirectly. The Arabs know what is involved, even if they will not admit it. One can also argue that the Palestinians, even the PLO, have begun to face the inevitable. First, in January 1971, the PLO approved the policy of recovering the occupied territories by peaceful means. Second, after long opposition to Egyptian suggestions, the PLO at last, in 1974, agreed to the establishment of a Palestinian state in a part of Palestine before total liberation is achieved. In taking both steps, the PLO avowed that it was doing so only as a part of the national struggle, yet the PLO has taken steps which it had previously denounced as the renunciation of the national struggle.

The present situation may be as open-ended as the Egyptian formulas. A settlement between Israel and Egypt which creates at least *de facto* peace between the two along with a Palestinian national government in the occupied territories is easily conceivable. The Palestinian government, however, will be committed to the national struggle. The crucial question is, how will the other Arab states, especially Egypt, behave thereafter? If Egypt leaves the problem to the Palestinians, then one can conceive of a transitional period during which the Palestinian state and Israel will work out a *modus vivendi*. But the Palestinian state will be committed to national struggle and the Palestinian government will be under great pressure to pursue the struggle with vigor. Time and again since 1936, armed struggle by Palestinians has exercised decisive influence on the Arab governments, so much so that some of these governments, notably the Saudi and the Egyptian, have been swept into action that they knew was unwise. Over the last four years, there have been increasingly tangible signs of an Arab willingness to accept the existence of Israel, but a straightforward declaration has yet to be made. The chances for a negotiated settlement between Israel and the Arabs appear to be better than they have ever been, but all who hope to see such a settlement should be aware that the countertendencies are still very strong. No one should think that peace could be easily achieved if only the Arabs would be reasonable or if only Israel would make a few concessions. The difficulties which remain are major, and no simple device, be it a Palestinian state or any other, will provide a certain solution.

C. ERNEST DAWN
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I would like to question Bernard Lewis's conclusion that "sooner or later a solution must be found which will provide a home for the Palestinian refugees and an outlet for the Palestinian political elite." There is no must in the political half-fantasy world of the Middle East. If Palestine is an ideological figment turned into gnawing reality by the malevolent manipulation of Arab nationalism,

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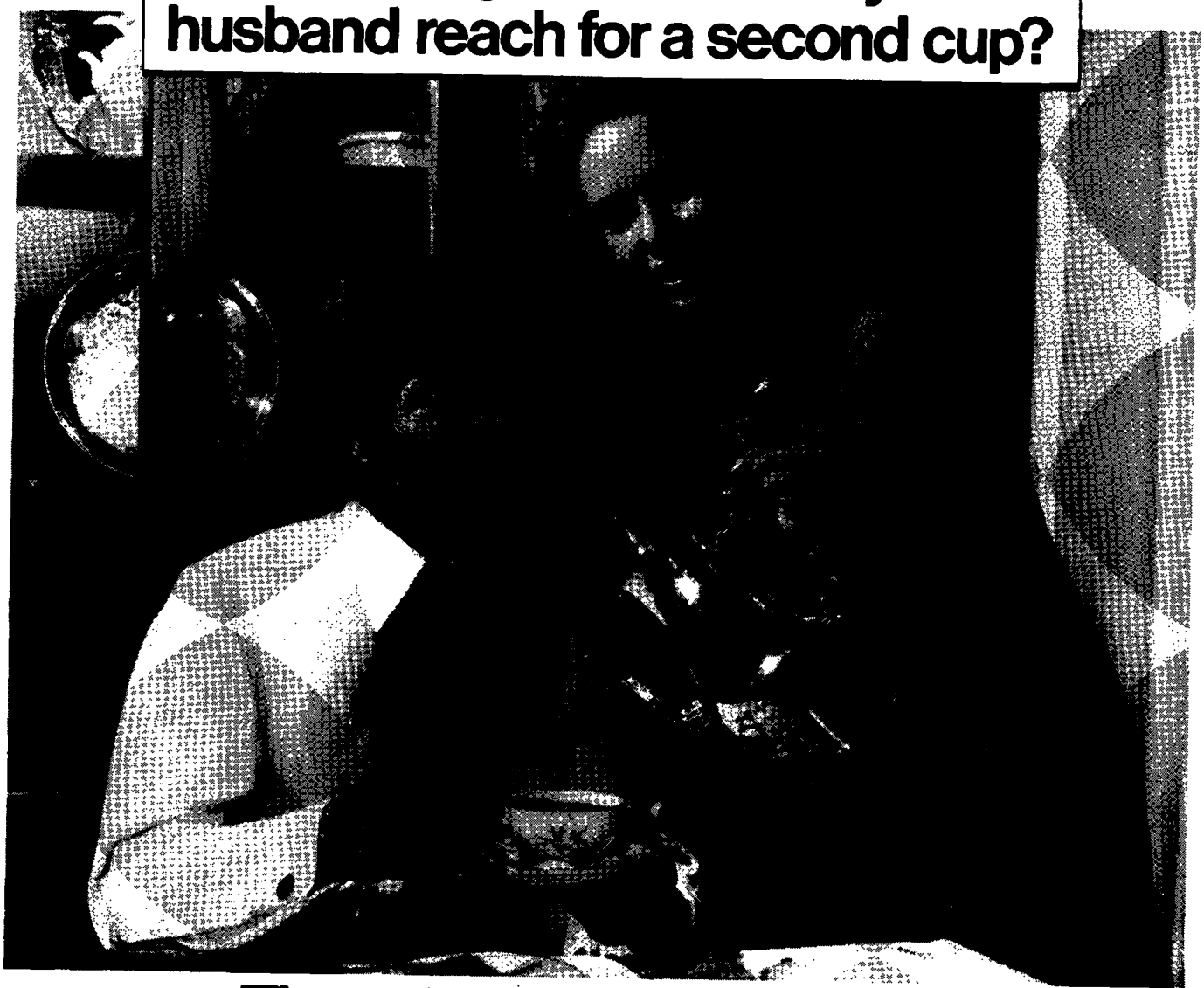

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then the process is not necessarily irreversible. There are now ample opportunities and funds to assuage the irredentist furies which feed Palestinian grievances. Every refugee living in a camp could be completely settled and rehoused out of excess oil funds. If that has not happened yet, then this tells us more about the fanaticism of the Arab false hope-mongers than about their credulous victims.

The PLO and its sympathizers never tire of explaining Arab terrorism as a natural consequence of the exasperation and bitterness prevailing in the refugee camps. Listening to them, one might be forgiven for thinking that theirs is a fate unique in the annals of migration. Their claims sound particularly tall when considered from the point of view of British experience. After all, Britain has opened its gates for hundreds of years to the persecuted and the homeless, to the Huguenot refugees, to those who fled the terror of the French Revolution, to the Jewish victims of Russian pogroms, to the Poles who would not live under Communist oppression, to the masses who left Hungary after the 1956 uprising, and recently to tens of thousands of Muslims expelled from Uganda and other "progressive" African countries. They all lost their lands and homes, they all underwent traumatic experiences. Yet, while nursing their hurts, they all endeavored to acclimatize themselves to their new surroundings, and with few exceptions succeeded. There were no vast oil funds to help them grow new roots, nor did they allow their frustrations to find expression in terrorist activities. Like most refugees throughout history, they decided that a safe home was more important than a national home. . . .

Mr. Lewis's article illustrates the forbidding complexity of the various issues involved. There is a cautionary tale here for the quick-deal merchants. It is useless to bully either Arabs or Israelis into peace talks at Geneva or elsewhere before the time for meaningful negotiations is ripe. The Middle East can do without the explosive consequences of another Versailles-type conference. Moreover, premature parleys that fail are bound to prejudice the chances of what could be achieved when the participants are more likely to agree. . . .

LIONEL BLOCH

London, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although subtitled "A Historical Approach," Bernard Lewis's treatment of the Palestine question accepts the definitions and categories of extremist Arab propaganda, designed in the first place to demonstrate that Jewish self-determination makes a solution impossible. It is logical enough, therefore, that for him the problem of Palestinian Arab national identity depends on a successful testing by Israel of the PLO's "willingness or ability" to abandon the Palestine National Charter of July 1968. No wonder then that his article ends on a strangely inconclusive note: "Palestine is a historical memory, an ideological figment, which may, like others of the same kind, become a political reality, or may slip back into the oblivion from which it was rescued; the issue is not yet clear."

Does a reading of history really teach us that the issue of Palestinian Arab self-determination in itself is unresolved and depends on Israeli-Arab relations and events on the West Bank of the Jordan? Mr. Lewis says that there are "theoretically . . . three possible types of solution to the Palestine problem." There could be an independent state based on the West Bank territory, or, second, an autonomous province there within the Jordanian kingdom. The third solution would be "that put forward by the PLO and its apologists—the creation of a secular, democratic republic of Palestine. This might be confined to Western Palestine or part of it, or might include the East Bank too, which would of course involve the liquidation of the Jordanian monarchy."

Mr. Lewis overlooks a fourth theoretical possibility which would appear to arise logically from this scheme. If the territory west of the Jordan is correctly designated "Western Palestine"—and it is—then the area east of the Jordan, generally called Transjordan, is Eastern Palestine. Palestinian Arab self-determination then does not depend on the disposition of the West Bank. The article hints repeatedly at this fact in connection with the threatening designs that the PLO may harbor for the future of the Hashemite regime if it were installed west of the Jordan river. In a different context within his article Mr. Lewis himself writes: "In a sense, all the inhabitants of the East Bank may be regarded as Palestinians just as all the inhabitants of the West Bank may be regarded as Jordanians. Basically the difference between the two names is ideological and programmatic rather than national or even geographical." Why should a historical approach be influenced by contemporary ideological and programmatic concepts instead of those of geographical, ethnic, and historical identity? Considering the ideology and program we are dealing with, with definitions designed for political warfare aiming at the destruction of Israel, the question is doubly valid.

A British Foreign Office memorandum, dated December 30, 1919, states: "The British government by their support of Zionism have . . . accepted the natural implication which Zionists give to the declaration of a National Home, i.e., an attempt to make Palestine a state in its natural geographic and historic frontiers and by gradual immigration and special economic facilities to turn this state into a Jewish state." The frontiers, broadly speaking, were drawn accordingly. Palestine (in Hebrew: *Eretz Yisrael*) was not then and is not now a figment of ideology and imagination. It has reality as a well-defined historic country, with geographical boundaries firmly impressed upon the consciousness of mankind. After these boundaries gained legal force with the establishment of the League of Nations Mandate, the British government, for reasons of its own, suspended in 1922, with League sanction, the application of the Mandate's Jewish National Home provisions to "the territories lying between the Jordan and the eastern boundary of Palestine." (This is the definition of Transjordan in Article 25.) The obstacle-ridden course toward the Jewish state was pursued west of the Jordan, but for the Arabs of Palestine there remained the whole of Palestine on both sides of the Jordan to move in.

Is it not absurd that a measure which in fact secured the Arab character of about 80 per cent of Palestine should be allowed to distort the perception of the Palestinian problem today? The distortion for propaganda purposes of the *geographical* dimensions of Palestine is a principal weapon in the implacable fight against what the Arabs consider the *demographic* distortion of Palestine by Jewish immigration. . . .

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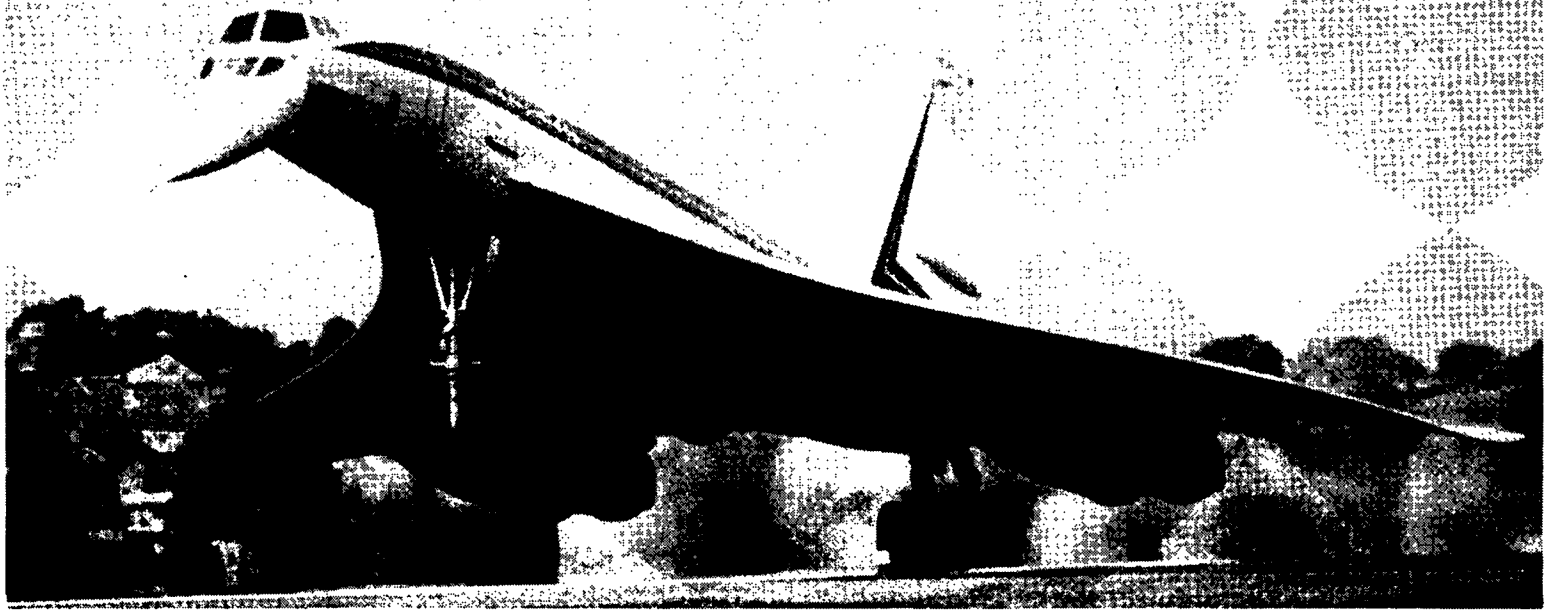

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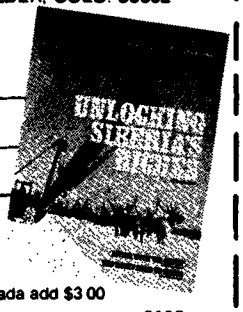

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emerged a Palestinian Jewish nation-state called Israel and a Palestinian Arab nation-state called Jordan. In fact, the fourth theoretical possibility neglected by Mr. Lewis happens to correspond to objective reality based on history, geography, demography, and international law. That some sort of justice was done does not mean that justice was generally seen to have been done. This is the real Palestine problem, and nothing could make a more important contribution to its solution than the understanding of its historical development.

Mr. Lewis has made it difficult for himself to interpret the organic relationship of Jordan to the Palestine question by making a basic error regarding the history of the Mandate. In writing that Transjordan was "separated" from the Palestine Mandate in 1921-22, he repeats an all too common misunderstanding, and he compounds it by assuming that Transjordan became a separate state then and that there existed such a thing as a Transjordan Mandate. Mr. Lewis's book, *The Arabs in History,* first published in 1950, has been over the years an important source for this piece of crucial misinformation. In view of its import on the present perception of the Palestinian problem, the error should at last be corrected. An outline of the facts of the matter was given by Eugene V. Rostow, in a letter to COMMENTARY [September 1974], which also emphasized their great importance for the peacemaking process today. It was also the subject of comments at the 1971 Annual Meeting of the American Society of International Law.

If Transjordan really had been separated from Palestine in 1922, it could conceivably now be thought of as a non-Palestinian Arab "host country," although not by historians. However, Transjordan was a part of Palestine in every way throughout the lifetime of the League of Nations, until April 1946. The Palestine Mandate placed before the United Nations at San Francisco, when it deliberated the future of the Mandate system, comprised all of historic Palestine east and west of the Jordan river. The partition proposal of the 1937 Royal Commission is one of the political and diplomatic interchanges which show clearly that in London and Geneva—and also in Washington—Transjordan was thought of as part of the Palestine complex, and British policy, of course, conceived Transjordan as the Arab heir to the Mandate, in 1946, in 1948, and even later. It was on the unity of Arab Palestine that King Abdullah in 1950 based the annexation of the West Bank which the Arab Legion had occupied in 1948. Threatened by Nasserism, especially since the 1964 Cairo summit established the PLO as its tool for the purpose of internal subversion in Jordan, King Hussein has favored the "Jordanization" of Eastern Palestine and its inhabitants, all Palestinians. The Palestinian-born ruler of Jordan has thereby weakened his legitimacy.

The sources of history have been muddied by the much publicized map of the Palestine rump-Mandate which the British government submitted to the UN in 1947, nine months after it had released Transjordan from the Mandate, under legally doubtful circumstances. This map, showing only Western Palestine, has helped create a perspective of the partition of Palestine which shows Israel with 80 per cent of Palestine until 1967, and in occupation of 100 per cent since then. In reality, the two-stage partition of Palestine, 1946-48, left the Arabs with about 82.5 per cent of the area of the Palestine Mandate and the Jews with 17.5 per cent. The West Bank, reconquered by Israel in 1967, constitutes 4.5 per cent of Palestine. Fortunately, the prospect of Arab self-determination in Palestine need not concentrate on this speck of land. . . .

Jordan happens to be one Arab country that has published an official census, dating from November 1961, to satisfy a demand made by the World Bank. By agreement with the Arab League, all inhabitants of Transjordan of cis-Jordanian origin had to be described as "refugees," whether they were settled and integrated or not, whether living in Amman or in new villages which had to be described as "camps." There were, in 1961, 550,000 "refugees" in Transjordan. The number of West Palestinian Arabs in the whole kingdom represented 83 per cent of the total population, while they constituted 66 per cent of the population in Transjordan. Since then, as a result of the government's economic development policy and of the influx of about 200,000 refugees from the West Bank in 1967, the West Palestinian majority has even increased. There are about one million West Palestinians in Jordan today, representing about three-quarters of the population. King Hussein has made the point that the Jordanian army which fought the PLO in 1970 was about 60 per cent West Palestinian.

In order to maintain the cutting edge of its propaganda against Israel and to play the charade of national homelessness, the PLO can wait as far as Transjordan is concerned. It can afford to show the map of Western Palestine only on its emblem, as a price for the recognition given it at Rabat. The gesture helps to maintain Arab harmony, keeps King Hussein in line, and calms the Saudis who are not eager to have the PLO as their northern neighbor. But this does not change the basic aim of the PLO and its understanding of the Palestine question.

It is significant that the question of a Palestinian Arab national identity apart from Jordan acquired its international impact only after the expulsion of the PLO from Amman, in September 1970. Arafat himself, when still in Jordan, told Oriana Fallaci in the spring of 1970 that the PLO acted in the name of pan-Arabism against Israel, and added: "What you call Transjordan is actually Palestine" (*New Republic,* November 16, 1974). . . . As recently as the day of his departure from Cairo to New York, the Beirut paper *Al Liwa* reported a telegram sent by Arafat to a Baghdad student-conference, in which he denounced as fraudulent Hussein's post-Rabat plan of depriving West Palestinians in Jordan of their Jordanian nationality. He added: "Jordan as well as Palestine is ours. We shall establish our national entity on both territories once they are liberated from Israeli occupation and Jordanian reactionary presence." . . .

In the summer of 1973, President Bourguiba of Tunisia gave his view of the solution to the Palestinian problem: "With all respect to King Hussein, I suggest that the Emirate of Transjordan was created from whole cloth by Great Britain which for this purpose cut up ancient Palestine. To this desert territory, to the east of the Jordan, it gave the name Transjordan, but there is nothing in history which carries this name, while since Pharaonic times Palestine and Palestinians have existed. . . . I maintain that the issue of Transjordan is an artificial one and that Pales-

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tine is the basic problem. . . . King Hussein should submit to the decision of the people, in accordance with the principles of democracy and self-determination . . ." (*Le Monde*, July 7, 1973). This historical approach allows for Jewish self-determination within historic Palestine. The other Arab approach, which the definitions of PLO propaganda are meant to serve, has been expressed by Dr. Fayez Sayegh: "Israel is, because Palestine is not; and Palestine is not, only because Israel is. The being of Israel is therefore an act of elimination: it is the non-being of Palestine. . . . Wishful thinking aside, between the rights of the people and the claim of Israel there can be no compromise. They are mutually exclusive." William F. Buckley Jr., who quoted him (New York *Post* May 23, 1974), thought that "this is a point of some merit, both historically and politically." The argument of Bourguiba has greater historical and political merit, but it has to be presented and established by historians. Mr. Lewis's conclusion leaves the argument in place as Dr. Sayegh and other PLO apologists present it, unless the PLO will settle down to a peaceful existence on 4 per cent of Palestine, providing thus "an outlet for the Palestinian political elite." If there is an Arab people of Palestine—and Zionism created one as surely as it created a Jewish people of Palestine—it deserves better than that.

It is a fact that no Israelis, even those whom Mr. Lewis calls "nationalist and religious fanatics," claim now that Jewish sovereignty should cover all of *Eretz Yisrael*-Palestine on both sides of the Jordan. What is required for peace is that the Arab claim to national self-determination should not cover all of Palestine-*Eretz Yisrael* either. In that case everything else would fall symmetrically into place. In spite of the partition principle and wherever the boundaries between Jewish and Arab sovereignties would be situated, there is no reason why Palestinian Arabs should not live anywhere in Palestine including Israel—as in fact they do—and why Jews should not live anywhere in *Eretz Yisrael*-Palestine including Transjordan. Even the thought that eventually a Jewish-Arab confederation might evolve in the whole of *Eretz Yisrael*-Palestine on both sides of the Jordan would conform to the Zionist vision, from Herzl to Weizmann

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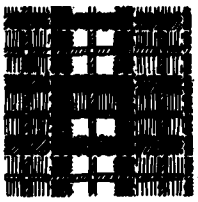

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and Jabotinsky. In this connection, Mr. Lewis might have an answer to the question whether, as Ambassador Baroody and other Arabs maintain, the Arabs of Palestine are descendants of the Jews of old, whether they are in truth "Hebrews of the Muslim faith."

PAUL S. RIEBENFELD
Institute for
Mediterranean Affairs
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is both astonishing and lamentable that Bernard Lewis, in his otherwise excellent and erudite article, did not discuss the origin of the Palestinians.

When organized Jewish resettlement of *Eretz Yisrael* began in the 19th century, the land was largely derelict and depopulated. Reliable census data for the Ottoman period are impossible to come by, but certain facts are indisputable. By 1914, the Jewish population exceeded 100,000 and the revitalization of the country generated an in-migration of Arabs from other areas, principally Syria and Egypt.

It is also well established that while Britain was specifically obligated by the terms of the Mandate to facilitate Jewish immigration and settlement so as to "secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home," it was precisely Jewish immigration that was always restricted, not Arab immigration.

The (British) Peel Commission Report in 1937 frankly admitted that Arabs from neighboring countries were free to enter "without special formality." With immigration from Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, and other areas totally unrestricted, it was ascertained by the Peel Commission that the Arab population had doubled within fourteen years to a total of about 800,000 as compared with approximately 400,000 Jews. Arab immigration for the single year 1933 amounted to 64,000. . . .

DAVID KRAKOW
Teaneck, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bernard Lewis, a highly respected authority on the Middle East, has presented an incisive study dealing with the historical background and possible solutions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is a most timely and dispassionate discussion of the Palestinians and the PLO, a subject of vital concern not only to Middle East specialists but to the general public.

The Palestinian issue is complex with no easy solutions. As the author rightly points out, the Arab-Israeli conflict is not a purely local one. Despite the UN General Assembly's Third World complexion, and the great-power rivalry in the area, in the long run an equitable solution of this conflict will require the good offices of the UN and the great powers.

KERIM KEY
Howard University
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bernard Lewis's "The Palestinians and the PLO" is to be welcomed for its successful attempt to remove many of the myths which surround the plight of that unfortunate people. It should also be received with appreciation for the way in which it seeks to dispel much of the current euphoria concerning possible solutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The belief seems to be growing that if an Arab Palestinian state were to be created in those parts of Mandatory Palestine evacuated by Israel then the dispute would be well on the way to solution. This view is false. On the one hand there is the question, to which Mr. Lewis alludes, of who shall rule in that new state. Is it to be the PLO and its followers, whose views even as to the form of possible government, not to mention the policies to be pursued, would be radically different from those espoused by the Palestinians who have remained on the West Bank? Mr. Lewis reports the objection of the latter to being represented "by gangsters in Beirut." The terrorism of the PLO would certainly not stop short of endeavoring to remove the traditional Arab political notables of the West Bank if a new state were to be created. The West Bankers could claim that "we stayed under Israeli domination while you ran away," but the PLO would doubtless reply with the accusation of collaboration and the imagery of Vichy France.

Even apart from these political considerations, there are the very serious problems concerned with the ownership of land on the West Bank. The refugees who would wish to return from the camps would presumably, and understandably, demand a territorial stake in their new country. From whom would this land be taken? Inevitably from its current Palestinian owners, some of whom could undoubtedly prove ownership dating back beyond 1974. The PLO's answer might be that of establishing a collective agricultural system, but if this policy were put into practice the cycle of dispossession and bitterness would begin once again.

Fond hopes alone cannot remove the many obstacles to peace in the Middle East, and those who espouse such hopes cannot have seen—or have not understood—the importance of recent and saddening events. . . . Sadat is certainly under internal pressure: when I was in Egypt in December and early January a common cry of the rioters in Cairo was "Hero of the crossing, where is our breakfast?" (The phrase is much more sonorous in Arabic.) To seek escape from pressing domestic problems by strengthening one's voice against an enemy is a traditional, though shortsighted, form of political defense.

A further discouraging sign is the recent tendency of certain Arab spokesmen to refer to what they call the "enrichment" of the two United Nations Security Council Resolutions (242 and 338) by other, much more sweeping, General Assembly Resolutions. This widening of demands is unlikely to reduce Israeli suspicions of the ultimate nature of Arab aims. On the other hand, the Israeli announcement that the nuclear option is within their reach has fostered Arab fears and may well have hardened hearts.

The problems therefore are many, and nothing is gained by pretending that the path to peace will be either smooth or short. "Justice" remarked Leonardo da Vinci, "requires power, insight, and will." The simultaneous existence of these three attributes is something that still has to be sought both in Israel and in the Arab states.

R. M. BURRELL
School of Oriental and African
Studies
University of London
London, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In discussing the resolutions of the Palestine National Council adopted in Cairo, June 9, 1974, Bernard Lewis compares *Le Monde*'s version and that given in the Arabic press with Henry Tanner's report to the New York *Times* on the same event. . . . For so important a meeting, I do wish that Henry Tanner had . . . taken the effort to investigate his story

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America the beautiful.

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instead of accepting a ready-made handout just for the Anglo-American press. Had he done so, perhaps James Reston and the rest of the New York *Times* editorial staff would refrain from lecturing Israel on its intransigence vis-à-vis the PLO. But then again, they would probably find another excuse.

Of late, I have noted that the "liberal" press and its spokesmen, in their intense ardor for a Middle East settlement, have taken on the same coloring as the isolationist America-Firsters of another generation, seeking any excuse, however feeble and false, to justify their new position with self-serving reporting. It doesn't take too much imagination to visualize Israel as the Czechoslovakia of the 1970's—a sacrifice for "peace in our time"—and, as in 1939, that sacrifice will have been in vain.

ISIDORE CROSS
Waterbury, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I think Bernard Lewis's "The Palestinians and the PLO" is an absolutely superb piece which combines erudition with a humane and realistic perspective on all sides in the bitter conflict. As a political scientist, I am particularly impressed with Mr. Lewis's clear assessment of the nature of states as human organizations and of political loyalties in the Middle East, or indeed anywhere. His assessment of the possibilities for the future is at once warmly compassionate and coldly realistic—a model of political analysis. . . .

DANKWART A. RUSTOW
Graduate School and University
Center of CUNY
New York City

BERNARD LEWIS writes:

My difference with C. Ernest Dawn seems to be largely semantic. I have observed that the word "nation" in American usage has become a near synonym of state and even country. In European, and still more in Middle Eastern usage, the nation is something different from either the state or the country, and is much more subjective. A nation may inhabit a country and find expression in a state, but the three are not identical. When the British Mandate was set up after World War I, Palestine became a country and was endowed with a state. As Mr. Dawn points out, the Palestinian Arabs, like those of other Arab countries under Mandate, recognized the need to conduct their political activities within this framework. This does not, however, mean that they have accepted the idea of a distinctive Palestinian nationhood in the Eastern Hemisphere sense of that term. There can be no disagreement with Mr. Dawn's concluding remarks.

Lionel Bloch uses the word "home" in a specific political sense of which the most famous example occurs in the Balfour Declaration. This is one possible meaning of the word, but by no means the only one. My point was that no solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict can be permanent which does not involve the removal of the Arab refugees from their camps and their settlement in normal conditions. This is surely a proposition that no one would dispute. There are various ways in which this might be done, but it was not within the scope of my article to consider them. A "national home" of the type discussed by Mr. Bloch is one of the options. There are also, as Mr. Bloch remarks, others.

Paul S. Riebenfeld is at some pains to establish two historical propositions: that Western Palestine and Transjordan were always under one Mandate, and that they were never really separated. The first of these is evidently true, and I have never sought to deny it, either in this article or elsewhere. The second is untenable. From 1922, Transjordan was under a separate form of government and subject to different regulations, notably in regard to Jewish immigration. Incidentally, Syria and Lebanon were also under a single Mandate. Mr. Riebenfeld's purpose appears to be to argue for a settlement whereby the Arabs would content themselves with the East Bank, to be called Palestine, and leave the West Bank to the Jews. Mr. Riebenfeld is no doubt right in saying this is a theoretical possibility. It seems to me, however, so theoretical as hardly to merit serious discussion.

David Krakow is right in saying that there was a considerable Arab immigration to Palestine from neighboring countries during the Mandatory period. There have indeed been some recent studies on the subject. I do not, however, think that this is very relevant to the immediate issue. The problems of an Arab born and brought up in Palestine and now living in a refugee camp in Lebanon or Transjordan are not greatly different, whether his ancestors had lived in Palestine for generations or his father arrived from Hawran fifty years ago.

Finally, I can only thank the other correspondents for their kind words and for their helpful contributions to the debate.

U.S. Defense Policy

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is always a pleasure to encounter Edward N. Luttwak ["The Defense Budget and Israel," February] in the pages of COMMENTARY. He writes elegantly, his sarcasm bites deeply, he is always provocative. Were he only a novelist. He is not, though. He writes on substantive matters and on issues of national policy. And he writes mainly for large lay audiences. As a result, a few liberties, an exaggeration, an imperfection in his analysis could affect the perceptions of a great number of people.

There is only one error of fact in Mr. Luttwak's article which is significant enough to warrant comment. The large increase in the share of the defense budget consumed by manpower costs should not, as Mr. Luttwak asserts, be blamed on the abolition of conscription. Most of the increase, at least two-thirds, can be attributed to legislation (the so-called Rivers Amendment) passed in 1968, long before the United States seriously contemplated moving to an all-volunteer armed force. The legislation specified that military pay was to be made comparable with pay in the private sector. While it is possible that military salaries would have increased to present levels in order to support an all-volunteer army in any case, it is certain that the burden of manpower costs would be nearly as high today even if we still had the draft.

A much more important criticism of "The Defense Budget and Israel" concerns its distortion of the views of many of those who advocate reductions in U.S. defense spending. Mr. Luttwak identifies two classes of budget cutters. While there may be a few people in the United States who propose a 90 per-cent cut in defense spending (Mr. Luttwak's first class), certainly none of the individuals or groups mentioned in the article, nor any other serious observer of, or participant in, the budget process advocates such drastic measures.

There are some who advocate a 25 to 30 per-cent reduction in the defense budget (Mr. Luttwak's second class), and a few of these

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are mentioned in his article. This group, however, is a distinct minority, as was demonstrated convincingly during the 1972 Presidential campaign.

The majority of those who advocate reductions in defense spending (a group not mentioned in Mr. Luttwak's article) urge cuts on the order of 5 to 10 per cent. People who take this position generally believe that reductions of this magnitude are possible without any decrease in that part of the U.S. military posture relevant to support of our real national interests and, incidentally, to the defense of Israel.

A 10 per-cent reduction in defense spending is made possible by changes in strategies, manpower policies, and procurement programs falling into four broad categories.

1) *Strategic nuclear forces.* While it is true that the United States now spends less for strategic weapons than it did ten years ago, many believe that further reductions are still possible without any impairment to national security. These reductions would be based on three precepts: (a) some of the current strategic-weapons programs could lead to less security rather than greater security, e.g., high-accuracy ICBM's; (b) some strategic-weapons programs are poorly designed and therefore too expensive, and cheaper alternatives are available, e.g., the B-1 bomber; and (c) the U.S. at present has sufficient nuclear weapons for any conceivable military or political purpose and, therefore, a slower pace of weapons acquisition is possible.

2) *Forces for Asian contingencies.* While the United States has disassembled most of the force structure built up in the Pacific during the Vietnam war, we still have roughly 150,000 military personnel in the Pacific. Additional forces are maintained in Hawaii and the continental United States, but earmarked for Asian contingencies. Many argue that given the redefinition of U.S. interests in Asia and our new relationship with China, further reductions in these forces—particularly troops in Thailand, the Philippines, with the Seventh Fleet, and possibly in Korea and Japan—are possible. . . .

3) *Manpower efficiencies.* The Defense Department has begun to increase the ratio of personnel in combat units to those in support and auxiliary functions. Some argue that an even larger shift in this direction is possible, with consequent reductions in total Defense Department manpower and, therefore, in the size of the Defense Department budget. Some specific measures in this regard would include streamlining of the military-educational establishment, changes in personnel-assignment policies, greater substitution of reserve for active manpower, the closure of excess military bases, and a reduction in the navy's land-based infrastructure.

4) *Buying cheaper weapons.* Finally, it can be argued that programs to substitute less technologically advanced and therefore cheaper weapons and equipment for some types of very sophisticated military hardware could be extended both in size and number.

In summary, by suggesting that critics of the administration's defense program are extremists and by omitting any mention of that large body of opinion which would choose far more moderate reductions in the cost of defense, Mr. Luttwak has done a disservice to responsible debate on U.S. defense policy.

Incidentally, he does a disservice to the cause of Israel's security as well. The United States faces many problems in the second half of the decade—problems whose solutions usually demand increased federal spending and which, therefore, compete with the Defense Department for national resources. Those who desire a continuing high level of American support for Israel—both in terms of direct military and economic assistance and in terms of a strong U.S. defense posture capable of supporting a firm foreign policy—would be well advised to take full account of competing demands. Economies are possible in defense spending; the more they are implemented, the lesser will be the burden of defense upon the nation. And the lesser the burden, the more likely will the burden be borne with equanimity by the citizenry of this nation in the years ahead.

BARRY M. BLECHMAN
The Brookings Institution
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Edward N. Luttwak asks how liberals in general, and liberal Jews in particular, can expect a high level of military aid to Israel to be

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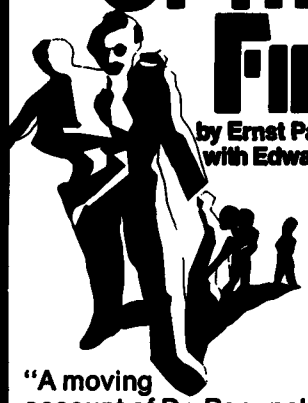

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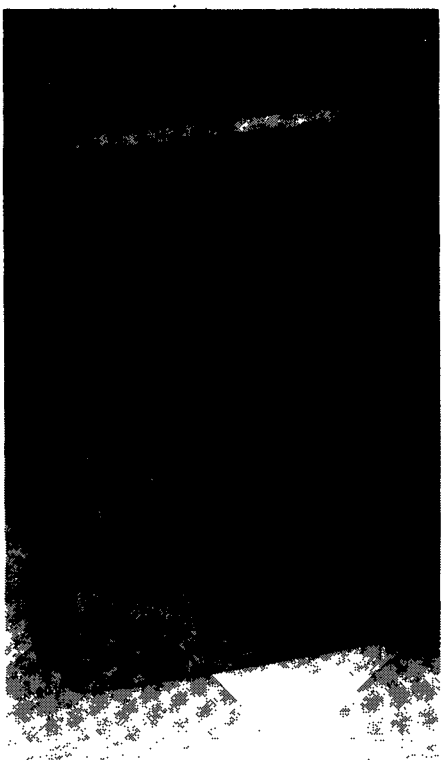

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maintained along with deep reductions in our own arsenal. Logically they can't, but emotionally they can and they do. The reason lies in a criticism, quoted by Mr. Luttwak, of the all-volunteer army: ". . . its enactment by Congress reflects the belief of the legislators that young Americans, unlike young Russians, or for that matter young Israelis, are no longer willing to serve their country, and if need be, fight for its ideals—or interests." If you change this sentence to read "young Americans . . . ought not to be willing . . . ," you have a pretty fair version of what many liberals do in fact think.

If America is as corrupt and as much given to immorality as it has lately been fashionable to claim, then this country can have neither operating ideals nor justifiable interests worth defending. Israel, on the other hand, has retained the allegiance of many in the liberal opinion-making elite to whom martial power seems a prideful and fitting expression of Israeli nationhood. So the liberals Mr. Luttwak wonders about appear quite consistent in their own eyes: They like Israel but dislike the U.S., as simple as that. . . .

There is also a strictly . . . political consideration. The intelligentsia (among whom I count the liberals Mr. Luttwak talks about) have been "in opposition" rather than "in power" in this country for a good ten years now. Power may corrupt, but I used to be in politics myself and I often noticed how lack of power could prove equally corrupting. The poison seems to work most fiercely on bright, aggressive people with an itch to rule—in a word, on liberals. There seems to be no antidote but the responsibilities of power. Eventually we will have a liberal government, and so political liberals will once again be able to identify with the country rather than being against it. . . .

CHARLES BRITTON
Manhattan Beach, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In almost every respect Edward N. Luttwak has performed a valuable service . . . by providing . . . a detailed appraisal of the defense budget now before Congress and its implications for national and international security. However, I am compelled to expand on his remarks about the marine corps in order to put in proper context our structure and mission. To do otherwise, I believe, would leave your readers with less than a full understanding of the role of the marine corps in national defense.

Mr. Luttwak characterizes the marine divisions as "essentially ground forces." Presumably, marine aircraft wings could be described as "essentially tactical air forces." Yet both statements miss the mark. What the marine corps provides, for less than 5 per cent of the defense dollar, is a set of three ready marine amphibious forces with similar capabilities. Each has both ground and air components under a single commander and staff and is supported by its own logistics organization. Elements of a marine amphibious force are stationed together, operate together, and are staffed primarily by members of a single service. As a result, the net capabilities of each force are greater than the sum of its components, particularly in terms of readiness to respond rapidly in a crisis with a balanced force of appropriate size.

Understanding the definition of ready amphibious forces as marine air-ground units in combination with the proper number and types of navy ships to support them raises the question of force levels. Speculation that a residual capability for amphibious warfare can be maintained by a small number of marine and navy specialists is perhaps superficially attractive. However, such a reduction in the nation's ready amphibious forces flies in the face of Mr. Luttwak's carefully developed thesis that our country must maintain a strong, versatile military establishment. Our strategic situation as an island in the world ocean dictates the essential naval character of any effort to project our influence in an overseas area where vital interests are threatened, be it Western Europe, the Middle East, or Northeast Asia.

In that context, and to meet inherent commitments for response across the range of operations from demonstration of credible force to sustained assault across a hostile shore, the marine corps is assigned its present mission and forces. To the degree that we can perceive strategic requirements in coming years, there seems to be no rational alternative.

(General) R. E. CUSHMAN, JR.
Commandant of the Marine Corps
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is a disservice to American supporters of Israel to suggest, as does Edward N. Luttwak, that our bloated military cannot be significantly reduced without endangering Israeli defense needs. Israel has asked the United States solely for an assured supply of up-to-date materiel. The Israeli government itself has rejected American intervention and even a defense pact with the United States. A substantial level of military aid to Israel would be about $2 billion a year. By comparison, the administration is seeking $105 billion in budget authority for the Pentagon in fiscal 1976 and an anticipated $148 billion by fiscal 1980.

According to Mr. Luttwak, every penny of this huge expenditure, which comes on top of the $1.5 trillion invested in the military since the end of World War II, is needed to deter "Soviet activism" through a global military balance which, "incidentally," gives Israel "a fighting chance." How incidental can analysis be?

What is "Soviet activism"? In recent years it has consisted chiefly of running a nuclear arms race with the United States; supplying military aid to allies, chiefly in the Middle East and in Southeast Asia; keeping a million-man army on the Soviet-Chinese border, and occasionally suppressing dissent in Warsaw Pact countries. But U.S. military power cannot end, indeed helps to stimulate, the arms race. U.S. military power cannot stop the Soviet Union from sending aid to Syria or Iraq, any more than Soviet military power can halt U.S. aid to Israel or Saudi Arabia. U.S. military power could not prevent the Red Army from occupying Czechoslovakia in 1968, just as Soviet military power could not prevent the landing of American troops in Vietnam in 1965. Finally, U.S. military power has no direct role to play in the Sino-Soviet dispute. In short, there are limits to the usefulness of military power.

Moreover, the kind of "activism" which Mr. Luttwak fears on the other side and encourages on ours is less and less meaningful in a world where the major problems are largely economic: the need for energy and natural resources, inflation, trade barriers, pressures from Third World countries for a larger slice of the global pie, and the burdens of the arms race.

Just as there are limits to the usefulness of military power, there

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is potential usefulness—if the means are consistent with the goals. The most basic goal is defense of one's homeland; the next in importance for the United States is defense of vital interests abroad. Strategic (nuclear) forces are generally devoted to the first, general-purpose forces to the second. The United States has overreacted at both levels. The existing nuclear overkill capacity is unnecessary to defend either the United States or Israel. U.S. general-purpose forces are tied to a host of peripheral interests in Asia and elsewhere, and to vital interests in NATO countries which, however, care more for their oil supplies than for aiding Israel. Undergirding the entire military establishment is a lavishly wasteful system of procurement which has fueled inflation for a generation.

Deterrence against Soviet attack was the earliest nuclear-age mission of the U.S. armed forces. That aim has long since been achieved. Shortly before John Kennedy became President, his science adviser, Jerome Wiesner, wrote: "Studies made independently by the army and navy have indicated that, even in the absence of agreements limiting force size and permitting inspection, 200 relatively secure missiles would provide an adequate nuclear deterrent" (*Daedalus*, Fall 1960). The army and navy planners undoubtedly chose the figure of 200 because it corresponded to the number of major Soviet cities. Since one missile carrying an H-bomb can destroy a city, the theory of deterrence held that the Soviets would be deterred if threatened with the annihilation of their population centers.

Defense Secretary Robert McNamara pinpointed, in 1967, the *number of separate nuclear warheads* (H-bombs) as the "most meaningful and realistic measure of nuclear capability." The number of warheads determines the number of major targets that can be destroyed. McNamara later estimated that 200-400 H-bombs could provide deterrence.

Focusing only on recent budgets for strategic weapons and the number of missiles, Mr. Luttwak denies that the United States has engaged in a nuclear arms race. But an examination of the number of *strategic warheads* makes the steady upward cycle unmistakable. The United States has increased its number of warheads from 1,830 in 1961 to 8,500 in 1975. The USSR has gone from 210 to 2,800 during the same period. We have 39 H-bombs for each of today's 219 major Soviet cities.

The United States has maintained its superiority in numbers of H-bombs while the Soviets have built more missiles with more explosive power (megatonnage). But, as the State Department has observed, "It is not the total megatonnage that counts." Four one-megaton bombs equal one 16-megaton bomb. It is the technology known as MIRV (Multiple Independently-targetable Reentry Vehicle) which accounts for the big lead in target-killing H-bombs. A MIRV is a missile resembling a space bus with up to ten passengers. Each passenger is an H-bomb that can be guided electronically to a separate target with great accuracy. Because they can reach so many different targets, MIRV's have multiplied the destructive range of strategic weapons. The United States enjoyed a six-year lead in MIRV technology. Only this year did the Soviet Union begin to deploy them.

Will we be more secure with more H-bombs added to the current overkill capacity? Mr. Luttwak grants that only a small number of nuclear weapons would probably suffice to deter an attack on the United States. He then argues that, "The real utility of strategic power must be found in its *political value*, in guaranteeing the ultimate security of NATO Europe and other allies, formal or informal, against nuclear coercion, and in deterring a much wider range of hostile acts than a purposeless nuclear attack on American cities." If Robert McNamara's suggested level of 200-400 H-bombs is accepted as a deterrent against a Soviet attack on the United States, why wouldn't the vastly greater current levels constitute a deterrent against nuclear coercion or other hostile acts to which a nuclear response might be relevant? Do our political guarantees become more credible the more times we can, in Churchill's words, "make the rubble bounce"? To apply common sense to these matters, perhaps we need to remind ourselves that we are talking about the prospect of genocide. After all, McNamara's modest deterrent force could have killed 52 to 74 million Russians *in a day*.

For the concerned citizen or public official, McGeorge Bundy's formulation is a valuable guide to reality: "In the real world of real political leaders—whether here or in the Soviet Union—a decision that would bring even one hydrogen bomb on one city of one's own country would be recognized in advance as a catastrophic blunder; ten bombs on ten cities would be a disaster beyond history; and a hundred bombs on a hundred cities are unthinkable."

A single Poseidon submarine can drop 160 bombs on 160 cities. When is enough enough?

Half-a-million U.S. troops are today stationed in and off the coasts of Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Western Pacific, Australia, and Antarctica. What, for example, do the 139,000 Americans in the Western Pacific and the 26,000 in Thailand have to do with either our vital interests or Israeli security? They are a leftover from the Dulles policy of anti-Peking alliances and the Korean and Indochinese wars. Against what threats do they now protect us? Two Presidents have been normalizing relations with Peking, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has asserted that "the Peoples Republic of China has only a limited capability for deploying its forces for any extended distance beyond its border." These realities do not inhibit Secretary Schlesinger from asserting that we have an interest "in seeing that the other nations of Asia are free to choose their own destinies." Haven't we heard that before? What is lacking is a precise and public definition of our vital interests by the government. If that were done, the administration could take the initiatives required to align our military commitments with our interests.

Almost 300,000 American troops are stationed in the NATO area, which is generally agreed to be the most important U.S. interest overseas. But nothing in the NATO treaty stipulates that 300,000 Americans must "maintain the balance" or serve as tripwires guaranteeing a U.S. riposte to a Soviet attack. Perhaps 200,000 or 100,000 would do as well. After all, if the West Europeans really feel threatened they might consider increasing their troop contributions to NATO. And if not, why must the United States finance half-a-million troops and civilian dependents in an arc from Iceland to Turkey?

In any case, the presence of American troops and bases in NATO countries did little to help

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Israel during the Yom Kippur war. Because of their dependency on Arab oil, the West Europeans refused to permit the use of their ports and bases for shipment of arms to Israel. The one exception was Portugal. Given the present government in power in Lisbon, that cooperation is unlikely in the future. In October 1973, the response of the NATO countries aggravated the problem faced by the planners of the U.S. airlift. The number of cargo planes was plentiful, but refueling facilities were mostly unavailable. Mr. Luttwak makes much of the fact that 22,395 short tons of materiel were airlifted to Israel in 566 missions as compared to 15,000 short tons to the Arab countries in 930 missions. He does not mention that the Soviets equalled the entire tonnage delivered by the U.S. airlift by sending three fully loaded ships into Egyptian ports. However crucial the U.S. airlift in 1973, any repetition in the future seems problematical without a shift in NATO attitudes. Besides, it would be far better to ship the required arms to Israel well in advance of any emergency.

The role of uniformed Americans abroad has expanded as the United States has outsold all competitors in the world arms traffic. U.S. military advisers, as well as employees of private firms, are now training military personnel in 34 countries. The Americans are teaching the foreign nationals how to use and maintain the materiel which the United States is shipping abroad in a swelling torrent. The Defense Department finances these training programs through contracts now worth $727 million. The largest number of training programs are in Iran and Saudi Arabia. Unstated military commitments accompany the weapons. Last October, for example, James McCartney of Knight Newspapers revealed a secret State Department memorandum urging a multibillion-dollar program to rebuild the Saudis' armed forces. To whose advantage?

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teed loans. Ex-Pentagon officials and military officers move into the defense firms and negotiate with their buddies who remain on the federal payroll. Professor James R. Kurth of Swarthmore College, who studied the process, found that a new contract is invariably phased in when (1) another is phasing out and (2) sales or employment drop 10 per cent.

Lockheed has long been the top defense contractor. Its C-5 cargo plane has been, as Mr. Luttwak reports disapprovingly, a symbol of Pentagon waste. For good cause. A. Ernest Fitzgerald, then an air force civilian cost analyst, in 1968 exposed the plane's $2-billion cost overrun. In 1969 he testified that Lockheed had made the wings structurally weak; cracked wings were reported several months later. Defense Secretary Schlesinger now wants another $900 million to patch up the wings of planes bought since 1969. During one six-month period there were 3,327 landing-gear defects in the C-5's. The first plane built blew up and burned. Designed to carry 100 tons of cargo to unimproved airfields, the C-5's were allowed to carry only 74 tons to established airports during the Israeli airlift. Eight of the 145 missions aborted. Fitzgerald has asserted that a $400 TV set would cost $8,000 if built at the efficiency level of many defense firms. Why should they care? Their profits increase as they spend more.

Space does not permit me . . . to rebut Mr. Luttwak's contention that the Pentagon's purchasing power has been declining. Let me simply observe here that inflation robs not only the Pentagon, whose budget the administration wants to increase, but also the poor, the elderly, and the schoolchildren who are aided by programs the administration wants to cut.

Dwight Eisenhower said it most succinctly: "Every addition to defense expenditures does not automatically increase military security. Because security is based upon moral and economic, as well as purely military strength, a point can be reached at which additional funds for arms, far from bolstering security, weaken it."

SANFORD GOTTLIEB
SANE
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward N. Luttwak's article opens the door to an issue which can, and indeed should, shake the American Jewish community to its very foundations.

In effect the question of the relationship between Israeli needs and the U.S. defense budget forces the American Jew to make a basic decision as to where his primary national allegiance is to lie. Today the aware Jew . . . is faced with a set of immutable facts, the most crucial of which is that for world Judaism the single most important question is the survival of Israel. In fact, the aware Jew must be a Zionist; and he must know that the opponents of the state of Israel are the enemies of Judaism. . . .

Since there is only one nation in the world which will actively arm the Israelis, it is the American Jew who must bear the full brunt of the contradictory forces at work. The issue simply stated is the following: to a great degree American and Israeli interests coincide. . . . But due to the oil situation, along with other political considerations, American and Israeli interests simply do not coincide 100 per cent. Generally speaking, the Middle East solution most in line with American interests would probably be a settlement imposed and guaranteed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Such an agreement would almost certainly come at the expense of Israeli sovereignty and territorial integrity, thus making it a difficult settlement for American Jews, let alone Israelis, to accept. The American Jew is therefore faced with this dilemma: whether to support fully Israeli aims which will indeed at some point run into conflict with the best interests of the U.S., or to support American aims which will at some point run counter to the best interests of Israel. . . .

In terms of the defense budget, then, does one support a huge expenditure which the U.S. can ill afford, but which guarantees the availability of extensive military help to Israel, or does one deem it necessary to put the economic health of the U.S. before the military security of Israel? . . .

S. K. SCHWARTZMAN
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his fine piece on the American defense establishment, Edward N. Luttwak remarks that George Scratchley Brown was formerly "air force Commander-in-Chief." The Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. air force during the most recent unpleasantness in the Levant was Richard M. Nixon; General Brown was Chief of Staff. Brown could only achieve the top post by election, succession from a civil post, or *coup d'état*.

B. BRUCE-BRIGGS
New York City

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK writes:

Barry M. Blechman's major point is that I attacked a target of my own making since those who advocate a 25-30 per-cent reduction in the defense budget are a "distinct minority." I am glad to hear this. He then goes on to state a case for reductions of 5-10 per cent, listing a number of possible savings, some of which are plausible. I have no doubt at all that if the Defense Department were managed by men perfect in every way such savings could be achieved with no loss in real combat capabilities. Equally, if some basic structural reforms were feasible, savings with no loss of capability would also be feasible. Unfortunately, the logic of organizations under conditions of stringency militates against innovation and reform. As it is, the radical budgetary surgery that inflation has imposed in the last few years has, it is true, produced forced "savings," but the effects on managerial efficiency have been negative.

On my supposed error in conjunction with the Rivers Amendment, suffice it to say that to recruit volunteers you must either pay them the going rate or else arrange with OPEC and the Federal Reserve to provide a permanent depression with high unemployment. Hence the 1968 pay equalization law is of little consequence.

To argue with Mr. Blechman on every point he raises would require pages. I would suggest, however, that he should look again at his own paragraph on "forces for Asian contingencies" in the light of what is now happening in Indochina. Is this really the best time to withdraw U.S. military forces from the Pacific? In North Korea there is already a politically bankrupt regime whose greatest ambition is to imitate Hanoi. Do we really want to set the stage for another Asian war?

Charles Britton may be right, if only in part. I suppose the great question is whether the "liberal opinion-making elite" can be reeducated before the current erosion of Western power reaches the

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point of sheer catastrophe. I for one never imagined that we would be repeating so faithfully the errors of the interwar period.

General Cushman takes issue with my comments on the marine corps. He states that the corps provides three active integrated divisions with organic support, including air, for only 5 per cent of the defense budget. He must agree, however, that this impressive level of efficiency conceals the corps's dependence on other services for research and development, and it also takes no account of defense overhead costs. I thought that I had made it clear that the integration of marine forces would only make sense in a world of pure efficiency where, among other things, a joint multi-service force would replace the present four-service structure. In our own world, I have no quarrel with the present force structure.

Sanford Gottlieb deploys a barrage of quotations to show that a small fraction of the present array of strategic nuclear forces would be amply sufficient to maintain the strategic balance. His main quotation is McGeorge Bundy's statement, whose logical meaning is that a strategic force of ten weapons would suffice to deter. Britain already has three very effective submarines with 36 Polaris missiles on board. France is acquiring a force of five boats with 80 missiles, and it also has 18 land-based ballistic missiles. Why then do Britain and France still shelter under the U.S. umbrella? Why are they not recognized as superpowers on an equal footing with the United States and the Soviet Union? Why did Mr. Bundy himself oppose so strongly the deployment of the European nuclear forces on the grounds that small forces were "useless and provocative"?

Mr. Gottlieb repeats the current academic clichés on the subject of "interdependence." Supposedly a revolution has taken place in international relations by which military power has been displaced by "economic power," and military issues by economic ones. Those who have been propounding these notions used to define "economic power" in the modern sense, i.e., to describe the whole complex of tangible assets and human attitudes that enabled societies to produce a wide variety of goods and services. This sort of economic power, measured roughly by the GNP, has always been the founda-

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tion of military strength, and no dichotomy between the two is valid. European and Japanese intellectuals can be forgiven for having failed to realize until 1973 that the key to their prosperity-without-power was the invisible protection of American military strength. Now that events have revealed the truth to all but Mr. Gottlieb, the theoreticians have quietly redefined "economic power" in terms of natural resources in the soil, on the model of oil. But this very different and primitive notion of economic power is a function of the ability to defend—or seize—the territory which contains resources. It has nothing to do with the general level of skill and industrial discipline of a population and everything to do with military power. In other words, as any good Marxist could have told Mr. Gottlieb, any distinction between military and economic power can only be a mere optical illusion. For example, "pressures from the Third World countries for a larger slice of the global pie" can only be enforced—or resisted—by the force of arms. Or does Mr. Gottlieb think that the common working people of the Western world will hand over the fruits of their own hard work to the dictators of the Third World in response to resolutions at the UN?

Finally, Mr. Gottlieb quotes the celebrated and colorful Ernest Fitzgerald in writing that the Pentagon would need $8,000 budget dollars to procure a $400 TV set. He is quite right. But even the Japanese would charge $8,000 for a TV set built to military specifications to resist shock, blast, EMP, and general rough handling, and procured in lots of 500 according to the slow rhythm of the Congressional budgetary procedure. There is no doubt that the Defense Department could do with better management: concrete proposals, inventions, and cost-saving techniques would be very welcome.

S. K. Schwartzman concludes his letter by posing a false dilemma. Where is the "huge defense budget which the U.S. can ill afford"? Even in a depressed economy, the fiscal 1976 request amounts to 5.8 per cent of GNP. Why on earth should this endanger the "economic health of the U.S."? The Soviet Union with a much lower GNP per capita is cheerfully spending at least 9 per cent of its GNP, and very probably more. Jordan, not the wealthiest nation in the world, is spending in excess of 15 per cent and enjoying rapid growth. The United States itself spent 8.3 per cent of the GNP in 1964 (pre-Vietnam) with no ill effects; 5.8 per cent or even 7 per cent (which is what *should* be spent in these disordered times) is anything but excessive for the American economy. Historically, societies have rarely survived for long in a hostile environment while allocating such a small proportion of their resources for their security.

Fear of Fiction

To the Editor of Commentary:

As a writer and a woman and not a radical feminist, I take violent exception to Jane Larkin Crain's "Feminist Fiction" [December 1974]. Mrs. Crain sees the new crop of brilliant, aware writers as shallow artists who are using their books for the sole purpose of rallying us to the crazed banner of the woman's movement. Nothing could be farther from fact, and Mrs. Crain's article shows not only that she doesn't understand the unhappiness of many women's lives, but that she hates to see that desperation portrayed honestly and graphically in fiction. Is everyone who does not "love every minute" of wife- and motherhood a radical feminist?

Women are now writing from their point of view about their world. . . . Men have been writing for centuries not only about themselves, but about women's personalities, proving time and again in fiction how little they understand females. . . .

Unfortunately for Mrs. Crain, she seems to see all works of dedicated male authors as literature while characterizing those of intellectual female authors as "soap opera." She is obviously too steeped in her own anti-ideology to see the richness and complexity in the novels she is so haphazardly analyzing.

Moreover, anyone who can place a group of novelists in such a rigid and patterned framework can know very little about the whole concept of writing itself. Perhaps Mrs. Crain needs some lessons in literature from the likes of Erica Jong or Lois Gould.

Roberta Goldin Morgan
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . It was with great anticipation that I sat down to read Jane Larkin Crain's "Feminist Fiction," and with equally great disappointment that I finished it. The author misunderstands the motivation of today's feminist novelists. Despite their disillusionment with marriage, none of the writers she discusses criticizes marriage as an institution. What they decry is the fraud perpetrated on women by the double standard in marriage. A husband who is unfaithful, critical, and demanding is, after all, a man, and therefore entitled to be so, but a wife who is capable of the same behavior is an ungrateful harlot. Mrs. Crain also seems to miss the frustration that is particularly the lot of the woman writer, who is supposed to write God a thank-you note for finding her a husband, but never a novel exploring her lack of happiness with the married state.

Mrs. Crain further misunderstands the heroines of these novels. She criticizes them for being weak and indecisive, without so much as a thought about the etiology of these traits. When Philip Roth or other male writers depict a self-hating, sexually exploitative, selfish anti-hero, clearly the fault lies with the hero's phlegmatic father or his pushy, aggressive mother. According to Mrs. Crain, however, in feminist fiction the protagonists' weaknesses are *sui generis*.

Since all of the authors mentioned in the article are Jewish, I cannot conceive that their religion did not play a significant role in their development. As little girls we were all taught to please, in the hope that we would then assume our expected roles in society. As Jews, we were continuously taught not to displease, since to do so would bring shame on all our heads. What an awesome double responsibility. In both cases, the rewards were the same. We could expect to grow up to be someone's wife. With most feminist novelists, I share the view that being someone's wife is lovely, when there are also other rewards.

Ruth S. King
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . Jane Larkin Crain's basic contention seems reasonable enough: why should . . . authors, "fired by the spirit of a movement predicated on the worth of women . . . consistently create characters unwilling to take any initiative in their lives?" . . . But Erica Jong's work seems to me unworthy of such shallow crit-

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icism in the context of stressing a point.

While it is true that *Fear of Flying* is an analysis and dissection of the qualities of the married state, it is not a black-and-white commentary. . . . The protagonist, Isadora Wing, has had plenty of time to analyze her situation; and being the energetic, imaginative, "unstoppable talker" Mrs. Crain describes her as (in fact, one could also take issue with Mrs. Crain's appellation of "chatterbox" to Isadora as being a snide put-down in anti-feminist terms of a character trait which, in women at least, Mrs. Crain seems to find annoying; it is doubtful that she would describe a man thus), as well as a writer, she has taken the trouble to explore thoroughly her dissatisfaction and attempted solutions. Isadora does not "drift, trance-like, into marriage because it seems the only 'normal' and proper thing to do," whereby all "needs and longings will be satisfied." Rather, her first husband insisted on marriage, and she "was scared of losing him, and . . . was graduating from college and didn't know what the hell else to do." This situation is far from uncommon and need not even have been disastrous. Isadora feels free enough to pursue her own graduate work and writing for example. . . .

The second marriage—to Bennett, an analyst—seems a logical Freudian rebound. Her explanation is simple and straightforward: "We were sick of being single; we were terrified of being alone; we were happy together in bed; we were frightened of the future; we were married one day before Bennett had to leave for Fort Sam Houston." Notice the use of "we," terminology which would also make one question whether the author feels that "all of history is engaged in a conspiracy to make women marry," to quote Mrs. Crain.

Neither is her second husband one to "suffer frequently from impotence and contrive to make [his wife] feel responsible for it" or "make outrageously unreasonable demands" on her. . . . Additionally, when she "very much needed someone to approve of [her] *act* of writing . . . he did that." "The fact was," Isadora maintains, "that he believed in me long before I believed in myself."

Nevertheless, she believes in herself sufficiently to refuse to bear children, feeling that her need in that respect is less compelling than her need to pursue identity through writing (and feeling that she could not handle both activities at the same time), despite considerable family pressure. Her husbands never pushed her in this regard, either. . . .

It is after five years of her second marriage and the publication of a book of poetry . . . that she feels confident about entering into an affair with a British analyst, Adrian. Formerly, she has only been able to fantasize; now she can actively confront her conception of a free life style.

> If I had learned how to write, mightn't I also learn how to live? Adrian, it seemed, wanted to teach me how to live. Bennett, it seemed, wanted to teach me how to die. And I didn't even know which I wanted. Or maybe I had them pegged wrong. Maybe life was compromise and sadness, while ecstasy ended inevitably in death. . . .

It is also evident that the heroine, if not mature by the end of the book (who is?), certainly matures inextricably with, and as inevitably as, the plot itself. Perhaps Mrs. Crain would not have written that "the characters in feminist novels have no notion of adulthood as anything other than a burden so heavy that it might be better done away with altogether," had she reread the last two chapters of this novel, wherein Isadora resolves not to be afraid of change, but to grow within it and accept the consequences:

> It was also heartening to see how much I had changed in the past four years. . . . I was able to spend long hours alone writing. I taught, gave lectures, traveled. Terrified of flying as I was, I didn't allow that fear to control me. Perhaps some day I'd lose it altogether. . . . As I got older I would probably change in hundreds of ways I couldn't foresee. All I had to do was wait it out. . . .

It is clear that *Fear of Flying* offers too much to be dismissed with sociological labels and superficial literary criticism.

EVE SIEGEL

Washington, D.C.

JANE LARKIN CRAIN writes:

There is no arguing with the predispositions of women like Roberta Goldin Morgan, Ruth S. King, and Eve Siegel. The books I discussed in my article are really

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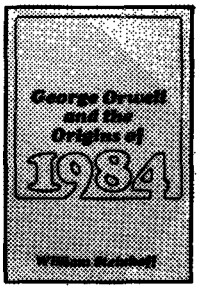

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quite dreadful, and it should be obvious (at least to the disinterested reader) that to judge them by the standards of literary merit is to find them wanting in every respect. "Feminist" novels (as these letters indicate) have won their numerous champions because they purvey a special "message" about the nature of things that some people are eager to hear. I would only say, to Roberta Goldin Morgan, that the "rigid and patterned framework" in which I "place" the novels of Lois Gould, Sue Kaufman, and Erica Jong (plenty of novels exactly like them would fit with equal precision) is suggested, *demanded*, by the unrelieved tendentiousness of the novels themselves. As for Eve Siegel's defense of *Fear of Flying*, I will reiterate—what is also illustrated by the quotations Mrs. Siegel has chosen—that, after three hundred pages of self-examination, Erica Jong's childish and narcissistic heroine is blessed with the revelation that only a life free of entailments (especially to husbands and children) will suit her. Such a sense of the world and one's place in it can be called many things (Mrs. Siegel's own term, "free life style," is apt) but it cannot be called "adult."

Historians

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The New History" [January] Gertrude Himmelfarb, echoing Jacques Barzun, swings her polemical ax in such wide arcs that very little in contemporary historical scholarship is left untouched by it. Not only are the "excesses" of psychohistorians castigated, but even the more "temperate" claims of its practitioners are disallowed; not only are the quantohistorians assigned at most the minor role of doing leg work for some cultivated generalists, but even the Marxists are placed among those pernicious progenitors of historical "fashions" which one can only "shed" with difficulty.

It would be impossible to do justice to the questions raised by Miss Himmelfarb in even a lengthy letter, but I shall attempt to deal with some of the issues she raises in regard to psychohistory. Rudolph Binion's article on Hitler makes him something of a whipping boy for Miss Himmelfarb, in that presumably all of the worst faults of the psychohistorian can be found in his article. It is not only regrettable but somewhat unfair that Miss Himmelfarb did not point out that the article grew out of one of several lectures that Binion gave on the subject, lectures which he was extremely reluctant to publish, according to the editors of the *Journal of Childhood Quarterly*, because their arguments were at once too "sweeping" and too "tight" to be properly footnoted. It was only at the behest of the editors that Binion agreed to publish this one lecture, with, it is true, considerable documentation appended to it. Nevertheless, this is something of a work-in-progress report and Binion is now preparing a book on the subject, a work which might provide a more suitable basis for judging both Binion and psychohistory in general. It is notable that Binion's well received book, *Frau Lou*, was completely ignored by Miss Himmelfarb.

Binion is taken to task for his unobjectionable remark that the reader must be able to "empathize" with or give "subjective assent" to the evidence being presented. Not only should a reader be called upon to do so, but so should historians. Any successful historical biographer, whatever his particular intellectual orientation, has sought to enter the mental and emotional universe of his subject; and those titans of 19th-century historiography, who remain so normative for Miss Himmelfarb, often sought to capture the "spirit" of entire ages or civilizations, a cognitive act that goes far beyond the mechanical stitching together of historical documents. Whether or not such attempts can ever be more than partially successful, they have sometimes resulted in profound and illuminating history. In any event, it is difficult to understand how Miss Himmelfarb can follow this by quoting approvingly Barzun's charge that psychohistorians are "mechanistic."

As the concluding swipe at Marxism indicates, Miss Himmelfarb's vision of history is a two-dimensional one, concerned with surface and bolstered by the conviction that her eclecticism is more than an extremely attractive article of faith. This leads her to the more than slightly ludicrous position of affirming the right of the historian to "psychologize" to the extent of asserting that Hitler had an "obsession" with Jews—a generalization supported by convincing documentary evidence—but of denying to him the right to seek the roots of this "obsession." Historians will insist upon asking "why" as well as telling "what happened" and "how it happened"; to do otherwise would greatly impoverish history and might well signal its demise as an object of the deepest intellectual concerns. These probings below the surface will of course involve a considerable degree of speculation—a word that is not a pejorative—but do not involve the exclusion of evidence, although some of this evidence may not be of the type with which Miss Himmelfarb is comfortable. A good example may be found in the brilliantly original interpretation of Isaac Newton's schoolboy notebooks by Frank Manuel in his psychohistorical portrait of the scientist. Manuel's work could also have served to demonstrate that not all psychohistorians write using the barbarous gobbledygook of the social sciences whose translation into historical writing is so correctly decried by Miss Himmelfarb.

Finally, one must confront the familiar accusation that because psychoanalytic theory tends to be ahistorical, psychohistorians fail to take into account a multiplicity of historical factors. Apart from the challenge that a convinced monist might mount to Miss Himmelfarb's not uncommon belief that a fuller truth emerges from piling cause upon cause as in some overly thick review book, a "temperate" psychohistorian would see the need for integrating his findings with the total historical context. It is of course true that personality patterns broadly similar to that drawn by Binion in his sketch of Hitler have probably existed among others who in different historical circumstances ended up as little more than misanthropic village anti-Semites. Nevertheless, it is difficult to fault Binion when, in his answer to George Mosse's criticisms, he points out that cultural, economic, and social factors in themselves cannot explain individual "doings"; for not only are a variety of individual responses logically possible, they are empirically demonstrable in most historical situations. One challenge to the psychohistorian is to delineate the ongoing dialectic between continuity and change. After all, the fact that there have been no fundamental changes in the human biological structure for more than 30,000

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years has not prevented man from having a rich history.

HOWARD E. NEGRIN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was dismayed to note the connection in Gertrude Himmelfarb's article . . . between service on panels for the distribution of research grants, which she casually mentions, and the utterly dogmatic view of psychohistorians she holds. Presumably, any individual grant proposal must be judged on its merits. But if all psychohistorical work is considered as failed beforehand—and Miss Himmelfarb has arbitrarily decided that this must be so—no such judgment is possible. If Miss Himmelfarb does in fact have any responsibility to any grant-awarding agency, she should disqualify herself—or be disqualified—immediately. The normal channels for the pursuit of scholarly research cannot be arbitrarily closed to any group of scholars.

FRED WEINSTEIN
Group for the Uses
of Psychology in History
SUNY
Stony Brook, New York

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB writes:

In reply to Howard E. Negrin, I should like to repeat what I said in my article: that the examples I selected were not, as he seems to think, those I regard as the worst of their genre but rather the typical or best. It is he, not I, who does a disservice to Binion in suggesting that I chose to discuss his article on Hitler because "presumably all the worst faults of the psychohistorian can be found in this article." I agree with Mr. Negrin that Frank Manuel's work on Newton is of a very different order, ranking with the very best of its kind—in my judgment, with that of Erik Erikson. One would not know from Mr. Negrin's letter that I discussed Erikson at greater length than any other single author, precisely to anticipate the criticism that I was finding "whipping boys" among the lesser practitioners of the art.

Binion's comment on "empathy" and "subjective assent" was not as innocent or banal as Mr. Negrin makes it sound. Binion was not uttering the usual cliché about the biographer's desire to enter the "mental and emotional universe of his subject"; he was offering "empathy" and "subjective assent" as a "further test of truth." It is this that gives point to his remark that we cannot "empathize with prices in 16th-century Europe to feel whether the influx of bullion from America really did cause their rise"; the implication is that an explanation in terms of bullion and prices is less true than an alternative explanation with which we can empathize.

Mr. Negrin finds it odd that I admit the validity of a "psychological" explanation about Hitler (his "obsession" with the Jews) but not the particular psychoanalytic explanation offered by Binion (the derivation of *Lebensraum* from Hitler's "oral-aggressive fixation" caused by "compensatory overfeeding" at his mother's breast). My reason is simple: there is firm historical evidence for the first and not for the second. What is interesting is Mr. Negrin's assumption that only the psychoanalytic theories go "below the surface," penetrate to "the roots" of the matter—which is precisely Barzun's, and my, objection to psychohistory.

Mr. Weinstein's letter displays a similar intellectual parochialism. If a favorable review of Barzun's book disqualifies the reviewer from serving on a panel for the distribution of grants, should not a favorable review of a work by a psychohistorian similarly disqualify the reviewer—especially if the psychohistorian claims to have the only "scientific" access to the truth? Or a favorable review of a book written by a Marxist? Or by a Thomist? The logic of Mr. Weinstein's suggestion would seem to disqualify anyone with any serious convictions or critical faculties. In fact, scholars of varying schools of thought have always found it possible to respect one another even while disagreeing, sometimes very sharply, with each other. It should not be necessary to assure Mr. Weinstein that I have not only recommended grants to psychohistorians, quantohistorians, Marxists, and others (including "eclectic" and conventional historians) with whom I happen to disagree on one or another matter, but that I have also recommended their books for publication, invited them to teach and lecture at my university, required my students to be familiar with their works. Indeed, some of my best friends. . . .

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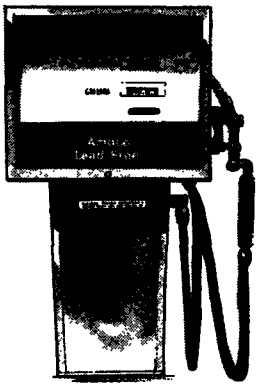

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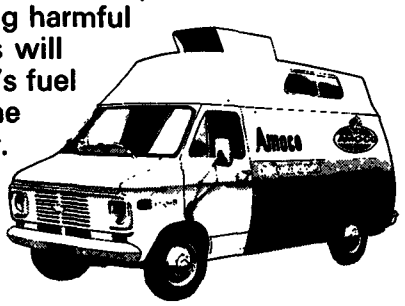

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Vietnam: The Final Reckoning

Robert W. Tucker

AT LAST, the final reckoning in Vietnam is at hand. Barring some unforeseen and unexpected reversal, the last act in what has seemed a never-ending drama has begun. How should we behave in the concluding phase of a conflict whose outcome we have for so long sought to influence? How should we act toward those we chose to support and whose destiny we presumed to guide? However one answers these questions, their importance is apparent. For what we ultimately learn, if anything, from this our first defeat in war will depend in large measure upon our collective memory of Vietnam. In turn, this memory will surely be affected by how we behave in the moment of defeat.

It may be argued that these are questions which should have been asked long ago, that at the very least they should have been asked in January 1973 when American military forces withdrew from Vietnam in accordance with the cease-fire agreements. In fact, they were only seldom raised. To be sure, many have asked how the war, and continued American support of South Vietnam, might be ended. But few have permitted themselves the assumption that these questions would one day have to be raised and answered in the circumstances we now face. The unwelcome truth is that most of us have been loath to confront the issues we have now been forced to confront. The sudden and dramatic turn in the course of the war has brought us to the full accounting we have so long sought to avoid making and one we have been encouraged to avoid making by those bearing official responsibility for American policy. If there is a pervasive air of unease over Vietnam today, it must be largely attributed to the realization that this dreaded accounting can no longer be put off.

At the same time, it is necessary to stress that this accounting is of a special sort and, as such, not to be equated simply, or perhaps even primarily, with conventional diplomatic-strategic calculations. It is not President Ford's falling dominoes and the presumably vital American security interests thereby jeopardized that have given rise to the unease. Nor is it Secretary Kissinger's strictures on the indivisibility of peace and the effects on American global interests in abandoning an ally (South Vietnam) in its moment of extremity. These arguments, invoked from the outset of the American involvement in Vietnam, are still not without *some* effect. But the effect appears rather minimal, and this quite apart from whatever intrinsic merit the arguments might have. Indeed, it may well be that the world of the middle 1970's gives a considerably greater plausibility to such arguments than did the world of the early-to-middle 1960's. Certainly, the American position in the world today is not one that will bear favorable comparison with the American position of a decade ago. These considerations apart, the point remains that the altogether familiar arguments of the administration in response to the recent events in Vietnam are markedly less persuasive than they were in earlier years, and even in the earlier years of American involvement in the war their persuasiveness was limited. The currents of public opinion, and of a substantial portion of elite opinion as well, are running in directions other than those set out by the President and his Secretary of State in defining American security interests both in, and affected by, Indochina.

Nor does it seem plausible that the unease over the impending dénouement in Vietnam is a response to expected recriminations—already surfaced by leading administration figures—over "who lost Vietnam." If anything, these recriminations are likely to still much of the unease that does clearly exist by submerging it in domestic political considerations. There is little the Ford administration can reasonably expect to gain by assigning the loss of Vietnam to the Democratically-controlled Congress accused of having been niggardly in the amount of support it was prepared to give South Vietnam, though there is a good deal the administration could quite possibly lose. This is so if only for the reason that the administration must contend with something approaching the status of a law of politics: responsibility for what happens at a given time falls upon those who currently hold power. To escape

ROBERT W. TUCKER, whose article, "Oil: The Issue of American Intervention," in our January issue has provoked worldwide discussion, is professor of international relations at John Hopkins and the author of several books on world affairs and American foreign policy. He wishes to thank his colleague, Professor Piero Gleijeses, for invaluable help in preparing this article.

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the operation of this law, however cruel and unjust it may in practice occasionally prove, the present power holders must make a persuasive demonstration that Vietnam might—even would—have been saved had it not been for a recalcitrant and penurious Congress. Given the difficulties of such demonstration, the prospects that it might succeed cannot be rated very bright. Clearly, it will take a good deal more in the way of "proof" than merely to argue that Vietnam would have been saved had Congress only complied with whatsoever requests for aid were made by the executive.

More generally, the circumstances of 1975 simply do not favor in the case of Vietnam even a mini-repetition of the earlier Republican "loss-of-China" gambit. It is not only that in the present case a Republican administration will have presided over the "loss," but that it will have done so in a period when détente with the Soviet Union (and, in lesser degree, with China) has been the great desideratum of policy. How is one to explain simply and persuasively to the great public that those who have been so instrumental in bringing about the loss by presumably being more generous with their ally than we have been with ours, are nevertheless the states with which we must continue to seek closer and more understanding relationships? The initiated may find little trouble in grasping these subtleties of statecraft, though in the case of the Soviet Union even many of the initiated are evidently beginning to experience some difficulty. It seems doubtful, though, that the public will be able to follow this logic.

Yet the charge against Congress of "losing Vietnam" may still elicit a strong public response simply by virtue of the blood and treasure the American people have sacrificed in Vietnam. To invoke this particular logic, to tell the people that its sacrifice has been in vain because in the end this sacrifice was willfully betrayed by those who refused to comply with the administration's requests, would be reckless and irresponsible in the extreme. It would recall a dark and shameful chapter in our history and, in doing so, it would put an even more miserable end to an involvement that has been marked throughout by little else than misery. Despite the occasional intimation that charges reminiscent of McCarthyism may yet be raised, it is difficult to believe we have in recent recriminations more than misguided, though understandable, efforts to prod a Congress no longer willing passively to accept either the judgments or the requests of the executive branch on Indochina—and, for that matter, on foreign policy generally.

II

THE question persists: Why the unease in watching the dénouement in Vietnam?* Why do I feel uneasy in observing a tragedy the last act of which can come as no surprise? Clearly, it is not because of any regret over a position of opposition taken and held for more than a decade. In retrospect, there is no apparent reason for altering that position today. I remain persuaded that the American involvement in Vietnam represented, more than anything else, the triumph of an expansionist and imperial interest which, by the 1960's, had submerged the narrower and more conventional security interest the policy of containment initially expressed. Without question, the involvement in Vietnam was also a legacy of the classic cold war, of the momentum generated by the cold war, and of the habits of thought and action the years of intense conflict had encouraged. Yet the greatest legacy of the classic cold war was the gradual submission of the narrower interest that containment initially expressed in the larger interest of maintaining under American leadership a stable and congenial global order. Vietnam was perceived as a threat to this larger interest, and it was the preservation of this larger interest—an imperial interest—that must ultimately explain Vietnam. In the purpose of maintaining a particular vision of world order, in the equation of this order with American security, in the hubris of those who led the nation into war, and in the reluctance to withdraw from a conflict that could not be "won" without resort to odious measures, Vietnam affords a classic case of an imperial war.

Thus the United States involvement in Vietnam was not primarily due to intellectual error, as the prevailing liberal orthodoxy on the war would have it. Nor can it be adequately explained either in terms of an ideological obsession pursued for its own sake or, with more plausibility, in terms of the domestic constraints of anti-Communism. These and similar explanations of the policy that led to Vietnam give to this policy a quality of disinterestedness it did not possess and a quality of innocence it did not have. That policy was not the work of incompetent ideologues who were blind to political realities and oblivious to age-old considerations of interest. It was the work of men who, though they obviously made mistakes, wished to preserve America's global preponderance, and who not unreasonably saw in Vietnam a threat to the nation's preeminent

* It is perhaps well to emphasize that "unease" is used here in a sense to be distinguished from the unease that arises simply from witnessing death and destruction (and, in this instance, the sense of shame among many South Vietnamese that an ordeal many bore with so much courage and dignity has been mocked by the behavior of an army in defeat). We all feel uneasy in the face of the suffering of others, quite apart from whether or not we have had any role in, or relationship to, that suffering. In the case of Vietnam, however, the particular unease experienced today stems in large part from the role we have played in the war and the nagging doubts almost all must feel about that role. Then, too, unease might in part stem from the self-deceptions that have been entertained almost to the very end.

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position. In the manner of all imperial visions, the vision of a preponderant America was solidly rooted in the will to exercise dominion over others, however benign the intent of those who entertained the vision. That this will was commonly cloaked in such disarming terms as "liberal internationalism" does not alter the reality. The policy of intervention—of liberal intervention—that culminated in Vietnam was the expected response of an imperial power with a vital interest in maintaining an order that, quite apart from the material benefits it conferred, had become synonymous with the nation's vision of its role in history.

Yet even for one who opposed this vision and the results to which it finally led in Vietnam, there is something awesome and disquieting in the swiftness with which so many have apparently abandoned it in the conviction that we have entered a new period of world history. It may of course be argued that the vision has not in fact been abandoned, only the methods by which it was formerly sustained. But given the world in which foreign policy must still be conducted, the abandonment of these methods is very likely to leave the vision little more than an empty shell. Indeed, the abandonment of these methods may well result in jeopardizing narrower and more traditional security interests. In any event, it is in the excess of Vietnam that we may find a root cause—perhaps *the* root cause—of an outlook today that promises to be as indiscriminate in its anti-interventionism as was the interventionism of only yesterday. If some of the now visible consequences of this sudden change are to be deplored, this consideration cannot alter the judgment rendered on our involvement in Vietnam. On the contrary, it can only strengthen the judgment made on the intrinsic folly of that involvement.

III

We come closer to answering the question of why the sense of unease over Vietnam once it is acknowledged that we never honestly faced the issue of how we were to disengage entirely from an enterprise—and this regardless of the consequences—which, even though we should never have undertaken it, we nevertheless did undertake. To have faced up to this issue necessarily meant facing up to its probable consequences—indeed, to its almost certain consequences—and this we could not bring ourselves to do. At least, this is true for almost all of those who, however opposed to American involvement in Vietnam, have not been sympathetic to the cause of the other side in the conflict. A very small minority apart, then, the rest of us have sought, whether consciously or unconsciously, varying ways to escape from confronting the issue we now find we can no longer avoid.

Although few were ever seriously persuaded that Vietnamization would really work, many nevertheless managed to find comfort in the promise that it might do so. Even so, the seductive promise of Vietnamization itself necessarily implied the indefinite continuance of American aid to South Vietnam, both economic and military, or at least so long as the war continued and the North continued to receive help from its allies. To agree to the one—Vietnamization—while denying the other—aid for an indefinite period—was either obtuse or insincere, provided that the South Vietnamese government and army made reasonably effective use of such aid. Moreover, experience had amply demonstrated that "reasonably effective use" in the South Vietnamese context could only be realistically interpreted with some looseness, unless it too was to prove no more than a deceptive—or self-deceptive—formula.

The premise underlying Vietnamization, and thus the implicit obligation to continue aid support, was not the representative character of the South Vietnamese government. On this all-important point, there has been, and remains even today, much confusion. It is true that, during the years Vietnamization was pushed as a way to disengage from direct participation in the conflict, many argued that such assistance as we might later provide would never be effectively used in the absence of a more representative government. Whether subsequent events have confirmed this long-held view must at least remain unclear in one respect, since we have no way of knowing whether a more representative government would in fact have made better use of the aid South Vietnam was given in the period following the American withdrawal. The contrary position is not self-evident, despite the tendency of its proponents to assume that it is. There have been governments before which, while broadly representative, have nevertheless shown themselves incompetent to conduct a war effectively. Moreover, in the case of South Vietnam a government more representative than the Thieu government—though a government that excluded the Vietcong—would still be one that represented disparate political factions which have always been largely devoid of any real popular support. After so many years of discussion and debate, we still do not have a plausible, let alone a persuasive, picture of the kind of government that would have elicited such support in South Vietnam. It is, after all, quite possible that none would have done so.

At any rate, this much at least is clear: if the strategy of disengaging from direct involvement in the war did not mean the abandonment of the South, it implied the commitment in principle to continued economic and military aid after disengagement was completed. It is disingenuous to argue today, though many do, that this strategy implied no commitment of aid, certainly no commitment of military aid, and that if such commitment was undertaken it was done in secret. The argument is disingenuous because the strategy of

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disengagement was largely based upon just such a commitment, and this was generally understood and accepted at the time. Nor is it relevant, in contending the contrary, to point to the instrument that completed and formalized American disengagement, the January 1973 Vietnam cease-fire agreement.* For that instrument did not have as its purpose the specification of commitments undertaken by the United States toward its ally, and it is captious to pretend otherwise.

It is for these reasons that it is difficult to gainsay the position of the Secretary of State in urging a review of the "public debate during the period that these [1973] agreements were negotiated to see what the imperatives were of the administration in negotiating these settlements" (although it is rather startling to find the Secretary making so ardent an appeal to a process he discouraged at the time). "There was never any proposition," Mr. Kissinger went on to insist at his March 26 news conference, "that the United States would withdraw and cut off aid, and these agreements were negotiated on the assumption that the United States would continue economic and military aid to South Vietnam."

The record broadly supports these assertions. Although in the press conferences and other public statements made at the time by Nixon administration officials in explaining the agreements the military aid question was played down, it was nevertheless answered in a manner that was clear enough given the circumstances. Thus Kissinger himself declared in a news conference immediately following the conclusion of the Paris accords that the United States would continue to provide South Vietnam with "that military aid which is permitted by the agreement" (that is, to replace used-up equipment on a one-for-one basis with identical equipment) and went on to state: "The United States is prepared to gear that military aid to the action of other countries and not to treat it as an end in itself. . . ." Similar statements were made in subsequent official explanations of the cease-fire agreement. When Thieu visited President Nixon in early April 1973, the joint communiqué issued at the end of the talks reaffirmed, though in guarded terms, what was by then a well-understood position. And in considering the administration's aid requests for Vietnam in the spring of 1973, Congress not only proved quite uncritical in its examination of the requests but appeared to take for granted a continuing commitment to military aid.

It is necessary to review these events, since memories are often quite short, even over issues that once aroused deep passions. The view that the American government, with the knowledge of Congress and the public, undertook no commitment to the government of South Vietnam in the course of disengaging from active participation in the war, may be true in the narrow legalistic sense, but it is only in this sense that it is true. The commitment the American government did evidently undertake was not unconditional. Few, if any, such commitments between states are. It was conditioned on the performance of the South Vietnamese and, of course, on the behavior of the North. But a commitment there was, and it is not only misleading but somehow demeaning to attempt to deny this today.

IV

In some measure, the argument that has gone on over whether we have had a commitment to aid South Vietnam may be seen as one manifestation of the temptation to believe that we were deceived throughout the course of the war by whichever administration was in power—though above all by the Nixon administration. And where we were not deceived, it is tempting to believe that our will, however inarticulately it might have been expressed, was simply ignored by those who bore official responsibility for conducting Vietnam policy. It is tempting to believe this—indeed, the temptation verges on a compulsion—since it relieves us of a responsibility that, for good reason, we do not wish to bear. In fact, the deception of the public and the ignoring of its will do not contrast so markedly with a number of other chapters in post-World War II foreign policy. Moreover, it is often forgotten how frequently in the course of the war deceptions were exposed and secret undertakings uncovered. This is true even of the Nixon years when secrecy and deception, particularly with respect to Vietnam, were carried to yet new extremes. Prior to Watergate, however, they did not represent a political liability for Mr. Nixon. Quite the contrary: if anything, the Nixon Vietnam policy, despite its manner of execution, ultimately turned out to be a factor contributing to his 1972 victory.

Nor is this all. The public will—one uses that shadowy concept with diffidence, though use it we must—was not subverted in the case of Vietnam, not even by Richard Nixon. It may fairly be charged that Nixon exploited this will for his own purposes. But if he did so successfully, it was because this will remained profoundly ambivalent toward the war. Though clearly desiring to get out of the conflict from 1968 on, the public never accepted the stark prospect of defeat. Nor, for that matter, did a majority of the foreign-policy elites, and this despite their opposition to the war. Nixon instinctively recognized this ambivalence, and it dictated his Vietnamese strategy through-

* The "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam" was concluded in Paris on January 23, 1973, the parties to it being the United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam (PRG). It was attended by various protocols, thus giving rise to such varying descriptions as the cease-fire agreement(s), the Paris accords, etc., and subsequently transmitted to Congress in the form of an executive agreement.

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out. By changing the costs of the war to the nation,* while effectively exploiting public unwillingness to accept undisguised defeat, the President was able to marshal broad domestic support in 1972 for measures that carried the war as never before to North Vietnam. The relative absence of opposition to the war in the last six months of direct American involvement indicated that public —and also, in substantial measure, elite—disaffection with the war had been largely a function of costs (and, of course, the absence of definitive results). This may be a depressing conclusion to reach, but it is one that is difficult to avoid.

The 1973 cease-fire agreement preserved virtually intact the belief that if we had not won the war, we also had not lost it, that we had not been defeated. This being achieved, the public could readily endorse, and was only too willing to endorse, Nixon's "peace with honor." The President and his principal national-security assistant, for their part, were almost as eager as the public to achieve American disengagement. In addition to its role as the most troublesome of domestic issues, continued American involvement in the war was seen as a constant threat to further progress in détente with the great Communist powers. The Paris accords, particularly coming in the aftermath of the last and greatest display of American air power, satisfied Nixon's and Kissinger's dual requirement that American withdrawal not be seen by the public as a defeat, thereby not jeopardizing the domestic support needed for "larger policies," and by allies and adversaries as an erosion of the nation's prestige and credibility.

IT MAY BE no more than poetic justice that the man who negotiated the Paris cease-fire accords has recently suffered so much criticism for efforts that were almost universally acclaimed at the time. But if Henry Kissinger merits condemnation for what is rapidly becoming in the eyes of growing legions of critics a veritable catalogue of sins, it is difficult to see why the Paris accords should be counted among these sins. Admittedly, the Nobel Peace Prize appeared at the time, and appears even more so today, a rather excessive appraisal of the Kissinger handiwork. But the present condemnation of that handiwork seems only slightly less excessive. For even if it is true, and it is true, that the Paris accords amounted to a delayed and ultimately miserable death sentence for South Vietnam, this condemns the Kissinger efforts only if it is plausible to argue that the results could have been otherwise and better.

No doubt, the results could have been otherwise and better had more favorable terms for the South been extracted from Hanoi. But more favorable terms could only have meant, in the main, the complete withdrawal from the South of the North's forces (together with some mechanism for enforcing the withdrawal), and on this critical issue Hanoi had remained intractable for years. There is no evidence we have that Hanoi might have been induced to alter its position on this issue, short of an American threat literally to destroy the North. Save for a handful of unreconstructed hawks on the war, nearly everyone else drew back in horror at the very suggestion. Indeed, the terms that Kissinger did finally get, though legitimizing the North's presence in the South, *might* (no more is claimed) still have given the South an indefinite lease on life had they been accompanied by the meaningful prospect that the American bombers would return should the North again initiate large-scale military action. Kissinger evidently wanted to retain that option—he strongly hinted so publicly at the time—but he was effectively deprived of it only months later by a President in decline and a Congress that forbade American military forces from engaging in hostile acts in or over Indochina. Once it was made clear that the bombers would not return, there remained no effective means of protecting the South, whether from its own misdeeds or from its endemic vulnerability to large-scale attacks by Hanoi's forces, and it is difficult to fault Kissinger's plaintive comment to this effect in his March 26 news conference.

It has been argued that better terms for South Vietnam might have been gained had the United States agreed to Hanoi's longstanding demand for an unconditional American withdrawal and Thieu's removal. But these terms would have been tantamount to American acknowledgment of an undisguised defeat and, for this reason alone, were out of the question. Even so, it obviously does not follow that if these demands had been accepted, Hanoi would then have been willing to withdraw its forces from South Vietnam. At least, this does not follow in the absence of a government in Saigon that at the least included, if it was not dominated by, the Vietcong. With or without Thieu, Hanoi gave every indication that its forces were in the South to stay.

There remains the view that even given the terms of the Paris accords the results for South Vietnam could have been otherwise and better had Saigon and the United States made a sincere attempt to abide by the terms of the cease-fire. Moreover, this argument runs, had the provisions of the cease-fire agreement been carried out by Saigon and this government, there would have been no need to send additional military aid—or, alternatively, even if the need still had arisen, it

* To *this* nation, and not to the Vietnamese, South or North. The key was the reduction of American casualties and the build-up of American firepower. In 1972, the virtual disappearance of what had once been a strong anti-war movement testified to the effectiveness of the Nixon strategy. Elite groups were almost as vulnerable to the strategy as the general public, though they indignantly denied being so. Yet the record is clear that it was American casualties—and, of course, the draft—which above all supported the anti-war movement.

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might well have been kept to very modest proportions.

Clearly, what is implied here is an overall judgment on the nature of the Paris accords, and it is a judgment to the effect that the accords provided a reasonable chance for achieving a tolerable peace between the South and North. Those who take this view do not deny that, in the best of circumstances, difficulties would have remained in implementing the accords, given the suspicion and hatred that persisted and the many imprecisions and deliberate ambiguities that characterized many provisions of the accords. Even so, it is contended that whatever hope there was for a tolerable peace was dashed by our behavior and the behavior of our ally.

The detailing of this behavior has been made on innumerable occasions and requires only the barest summary. Saigon, with our encouragement, hardly waited until the ink of the agreement was dry before initiating what amounted to offensive actions. Thieu almost immediately reneged on his pledge to release political prisoners, as he did with respect to the obligations entailed in setting up a National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord. The mechanism for broadening political activity in the South was thus subverted while the provisions for organizing free elections under international supervision were simply ignored. On the American side, a series of commitments, some public though others secret, presumably went unfulfilled. Among the latter are included the promise to withdraw all American civilians in the South who were engaged in the support of Saigon's armed forces and the undertaking to cease American air reconnaissance over North Vietnam.*

One might counter this indictment with the numerous violations of the Paris accords charged to the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, violations also alleged to have begun in the months immediately following conclusion of the accords. Would any useful purpose be served by doing so, and by entering into a detailed examination of the order and magnitude of the violations undertaken by the two sides in order to assess relative responsibility for the breakdown of the cease-fire agreement? It would not seem so. Even a casual rereading of the Paris accords only serves to reinforce the conclusion, apparent at the time they were negotiated, that their almost incredible ambiguities meant either that their successful implementation required maximum efforts toward mutual understanding and good will, or that their purpose was simply to provide the means for America's military disengagement while leaving the situation otherwise essentially unchanged. Since the former interpretation is either merely tendentious or absurd, or perhaps both, we are left with the latter interpretation. This being so, it is a largely useless exercise to ask who undermined the agreement. The agreement was made to be undermined; its provisions seemed almost designed to invite evasion and subversion.

The American negotiators may still be judged adversely for having concluded the cease-fire agreement. But fairness requires recognition that the alternatives were either roughly the kind of agreement that was concluded or no agreement at all. Whereas the former alternative permitted military disengagement and the return of American war prisoners, the latter alternative promised —at best—military disengagement. There was of course a third alternative that would have obtained military disengagement and the return of the prisoners of war. This was the acknowledgment of defeat and, as a consequence of such admission, the abandonment of an ally. It was not only the Nixon administration that was completely unwilling to contemplate this third alternative. So was the nation, though in lesser degree. In light of what we now know, it is easy and fashionable to say that the third alternative would have represented the course of wisdom. For it is only by the barest of subterfuges that we may now continue to pretend that we were not defeated in Vietnam. Pride often counts for more than wisdom, however, and particularly in the case of powerful nations. And even were it not for pride, there was always the question of what to do with those whose destiny we sought to determine, however misguidedly, and whom, though their destiny is no longer within our reach (if, indeed, it ever really was), we cannot with honor simply cast aside.

V

THERE is an almost instinctively negative reaction to once again raising the matter of honor in relation to Vietnam. The reaction is surely understandable, even if misplaced. Abused and perverted on so many occasions during the past decade in relation to the war, the American involvement in Vietnam has almost succeeded in giving honor a bad name. Are we to conclude from this experience, however, that there is no such thing as honor or that honor can have no relevance to the manner in which as a nation we behave toward others? Apparently not, for it is the most extreme opponents of the war who have themselves been most insistent on seeing Vietnam as raising above all a moral issue and therefore, by implication, a matter of honor. Whether morality, and honor, occupy so exalted a position in the affairs of nations is a question that need not be entered into here. It is sufficient to insist that honor does enter into such affairs and that nations may dishonor, and have dishonored, themselves.

There can be no objection, then, to raising the matter of honor at this late date and to ask what

* These and other secret commitments are discussed by Tad Szulc, "Beyond the Vietnam Cease-Fire Agreement," *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1974), pp. 21-69.

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remaining obligations, if any, we have that have grown out of our role in the Vietnamese conflict. It is no criticism of the Secretary of State that he has seen fit to ask this question and to answer it. Mr. Kissinger believes that in the "moment of extremity" of an ally the test of our character as a people is whether we are willing to stand by a commitment earlier made and to continue aid to that ally. This is, to him, "an elementary question of what kind of a people we are . . . a fundamental question of how we are viewed by all other people, and it has nothing to do with the question of whether we should ever have gotten involved there [Indochina] in the first place." To desert one's ally even when the latter's cause has become extreme is to dishonor oneself. And so it is, provided the commitment itself was an honorable one and the recipient has fulfilled the conditions implied by the commitment. To argue that even a dishonorable commitment, once made, can only be abandoned at the cost of honor itself is simply perverse. To insist that the recipient of a commitment deserves one's continued loyalty even if he has failed to fulfill the conditions of the commitment is unreasonable.

Whether the commitment made to South Vietnam is judged more than a mistake is a question that need not be argued here. What is of relevance is whether the South Vietnamese government made reasonably effective use of such aid as was given it. For if it did not do so, the further question whether it was given "adequate" aid need not even be considered. Did our ally fulfill the elementary condition implied by the commitment? There is very little evidence to support the view that it did, and a great deal of evidence to support the view that it did not. By almost any reasonable standard of effectiveness of performance, and even assuming for the sake of argument the existence of certain shortages due to the alleged penury of the aid-giver, the indispensable condition of continued moral obligation simply was not met. What follows from this is not that one may view with indifference the plight of those remnants of an armed force which do remain willing and able to fight. There is, in fact, no generally satisfactory answer that can be given in such extreme and agonizing situations, save to say —and it is concededly not much—that such answer must be determined by practical as well as humanitarian criteria. On the major issue, however, the response seems quite clear: there remains no obligation to be violated.

These considerations have taken administration arguments, particularly those of Mr. Kissinger, at face value. But this surely cannot be the end of the matter. We are entitled to ask, why the extraordinary sensitivity shown, not merely over keeping commitments—this is altogether expected—but over the moral necessity of doing so? While the Secretary may not be altogether insensitive to moral issues in statecraft, as his critics so regularly depict him as being, no one can accuse him of ever having been obsessed with such issues. Clearly, he is obsessed with issues of credibility and prestige, and while the importance of these issues may be granted, they are not synonymous with moral issues. The suspicion accordingly must arise that the Secretary has sought to use the moral on behalf of the strategic, that he has been looking at strategic interests and presenting them in moral terms.

IF THERE is nothing heinous in this, it is also not particularly admirable, above all in the present agony of South Vietnam. Moral sensitivity, one would have thought, might well have been directed in other and rather obvious directions, while strategic interests were being displayed for what they are. One such direction moral sensitivity can take is toward those South Vietnamese whose lives may be placed in jeopardy under a Communist, or Communist-dominated, regime if only because of past associations with the Americans. No one knows how many such persons may fall into this, and still other, categories, but it would be rash to assume the number is small.

Those who have for so long pressed the specter of a "blood bath" cannot in good conscience remain silent today toward the one measure that could remove their fear. The responsibility for granting asylum must be seen as a kind of litmus-paper test of the sense of obligation we feel, if not toward all those who will be placed in danger for whatever reason in a new regime, then at least toward those who have compromised themselves through past association with us. If the question of numbers is raised, it is well to recall that we took in 600,000 refugees from Cuba during the years following Castro's accession to power. Yet in the majority of cases, there was no physical danger posed to the Cuban emigrés and little obligation on our part by virtue of our own actions, as there is in Vietnam.

Nor is it only a matter of simple moral obligation that is involved in the case of Vietnam; it is also a test of the racism with which we have been taxed by others, and particularly in our attitudes and actions toward Asians. A refusal to make every effort to take in those Vietnamese who wish to leave and whose position has been compromised by us will confirm, as perhaps nothing else could, the charge we have so indignantly denied throughout the war.

Beyond this, if we are so concerned with our image of ourselves in defeat, as well we should be, we cannot avoid facing the issue of American economic aid to a South Vietnam we no longer influence. It is now known that in March 1973, the United States and North Vietnam came close to an agreement on American aid to the North for reconstruction. The agreement proved abortive because of the Nixon administration's ire over

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Communist truce violations and public indignation, reflected in Congress, over Hanoi's treatment of American prisoners of war, then being released. If aid for reconstruction was nevertheless justified in principle in the case of the North in 1973, then there is surely as strong a case to be made today for aiding the South, or, for that matter, the whole of Vietnam. To be militarily frustrated, and eventually defeated, by so small a state is humiliating, and nothing we say can deny this. Even so, generosity in defeat is not demeaning and certainly not for a great power. There is no reason why we cannot be as generous in defeat today as we have been in victory in the past.

VI

THESE observations are not intended to convey the impression that the final reckoning in Vietnam must be seen only in moral terms. Although the moral dimension of any accounting we are to make is important, the strategic dimension obviously cannot be neglected. What I have objected to is a view that misreads, if it does not pervert, the nature of the moral obligation that emerged from our commitment to South Vietnam, and that does so out of concern for strategic interests. Moreover, considering the immediate area to which this view has been applied, one must amend the preceding sentence to read that a mistaken strategic interest is equated with a spurious moral obligation. Applied elsewhere, to areas of real interest and to conditions altogether different from those that prevailed in Vietnam, the effects of this argument could prove to be devastating.

It is the tone as much as the substance of administration reactions to what has happened in Vietnam that are disturbing. While many have in retrospect unfairly criticized the 1973 Paris accords, the principal architect of those accords also insists upon finding a meaning in them they did not have. The apparent intent is to relieve himself of any responsibility for recent events in Vietnam. Yet there is the more ominous suggestion in the Kissinger reaction that what might now happen elsewhere (the Middle East?) must be seen as a result of the nation's failure to have appreciated its interests in and to have stood by its commitments to South Vietnam. One can only trust that this is little more than a passing mood, a short-lived reaction to a failure that can no longer be obscured. If it is more than that, if it is indicative of a more persistent attitude that finds increasing expression in American policy, then the prospect beckons of a determination by our policy-makers to create their own dominoes.

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The Revenge of the Philistines

Tom Wolfe & Avant-Garde Chic

Hilton Kramer

MIDWAY through the 1970's, it looks more and more as if the present decade is destined to become the graveyard of all those illusions and chimeras spawned in the radical culture of the 1960's. The signs of recoil and retrenchment, hesitant and uncertain only two or three years ago, now gather momentum with dizzying speed: the noise of recantation fairly fills the air. In certain notable cases, the very protagonists of the "new sensibility" of the 60's have suddenly reemerged—chastened, one would like to think, but perhaps only well-practiced in their reading of the opportunities—as spokesmen for the values they so recently lavished with furious contempt. When we open the pages of the *New York Review of Books* to find Susan Sontag energetically rebuking "the infantile leftism of the 1960's," we may be reasonably certain that we are in the presence of one of those geologic shifts that completely alter the ideological terrain on which we stand.

Because the visual arts have occupied the center of the cultural stage in this country since the international success of the New York School in the 1950's, the evidence of change is perhaps a little more blatant in this realm than in others—but what is happening in the visual arts is surely emblematic of something widespread and momentous. We are witnessing the final collapse of the great myth that dominated the aspirations of high culture in the West for more than a century—the myth of avant-garde intransigence and revolt that gave to all of modernist culture its aura of moral combat—and we are seeing, at the same time, the opening skirmishes of a new contest to determine precisely what the relation of culture to power will be in the post-modernist era upon which we have now entered.

This contest is taking two forms, and it is imperative—imperative, at least, for those of us who wish to distinguish and defend the values of high culture from the onslaught of its trashy simulacra—that we make a clear and unequivocal distinction between them. We have, on the one hand, a growing movement—among artists and art historians, and among the critics and curators who pay close attention to their shifts of taste and allegiance—to reconsider all those options and alternatives so long foreclosed by the pieties of vanguard doctrine. This is a movement of the greatest consequence, for whatever it may eventually produce, or fail to produce, in the way of new art—and it has already reestablished realism as a viable artistic enterprise in painting—it has initiated some drastic revisions in the way the history of modern painting is perceived and evaluated. No longer are the legendary *cénacles* of avant-garde incendiaries presumed to have an exclusive patent on artistic excellence. The official Salon of 19th-century France, once the most detested of all the institutions that conspired against a just appreciation of avant-garde achievement, is now the subject of an intense and competitive research. Forgotten academicians are being exhumed by the carload, and museums vie with each other for the honor of exhibiting the enemies of Manet and Cézanne, who, coincidentally, are suddenly discovered to have links with the academy never suspected by their radical defenders of yesteryear.

This revisionist attack on the orthodox reading of modernist art history has the virtue of reopening some fundamental questions about the relation of art to the society that produces and exalts it—questions that are now, as the result of this effort, seen as no longer susceptible of the simplistic answers provided by *révolté* ideology. Bourgeois taste, in this new reading of history, is not regarded as necessarily fatal to the life of the imagination; an art that flatters or at least accommodates itself to established power is not automatically dismissed as contemptible. It is more readily assumed that in a decent and enlightened modern society, art—including the highest art—may have a plurality of functions to perform, and that the one honored above all others in the mythology of the avant-garde—the celebrated charge, *épater* the bourgeoisie—is not invariably the most important or the most enduring. It does not require any special genius, I think, to see in this sweeping revisionism an oblique, or at least an unacknowledged, reflection of the peaceful accommodation that now obtains between art and the middle class, and—what is already looming as a factor of even greater consequence—between art and the various government agencies responsible for art's support. A society more and more dependent

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upon government subsidies for its own cultural prosperity will naturally have some second thoughts about the role of patronage and approved taste in the era that allegedly saw the artist and the bourgeoisie locked in mortal combat, though it is still part of the comedy of culture for these thoughts to remain disguised in the rhetoric of disinterested research.

On the other hand—and this is the darker and more threatening aspect of the contest I speak of—this whole revisionist enterprise has contained from the beginning a large element of philistine revenge. That the excesses and exclusivities of modernist art are beginning to be denied the easy ordination and overblown praise that would have been granted them, say, ten years ago, as if by divine right, is not, in my opinion, a vicissitude to be despised. But something other than critical intelligence is also at work in this refusal to embrace the latest inanities of the far-out fringe of modernism—something virulent and reactionary that looks dangerously close at times to an assault on mind itself. It is not merely the peripheral rubbish foisted upon us in the name of modernism that is being scuttled in this accelerating reversal of taste. What we are seeing, I think, is the beginning of a resurgent campaign to discredit the mainstream of modernist achievement. In no other branch of the arts, in no other arena of public taste, has the hegemony of the avant-garde ideal enjoyed such sustained and unbounded patronage and prestige as in the visual arts, and it is the latter, therefore, that provide the broadest and most accessible target for the feelings of revulsion and nostalgia that are now gathering force. Not only is there now an epidemic desire to restore to the highest respectability some of the very worst examples of the kind of art that the modern movement seemed, only a few years ago, to have permanently retired from serious consideration—as I write, the Metropolitan Museum of Art is showing a collection of paintings originally exhibited at the Royal Academy during the reign of Queen Victoria, and the New York Cultural Center, always eager to raise the ante in such matters, is showing French military paintings from the 1870's—but there is, along with it, a correlative passion to turn back the clock of history, to liquidate all those difficulties of perception and discriminations of feeling that are the very essence of the modernist accomplishment.

IF ONE had any lingering doubt that the revenge of the philistines is upon us, it would surely be put to rest by the spectacle of Tom Wolfe's energetic assault on contemporary art in the April number of *Harper's* magazine.* There is, of course, a tradition of philistine hostility to modernist art at *Harper's*—one can read about it in Russell Lynes's history of the Museum of Modern Art, called *Good Old Modern*, published in 1973—but Wolfe's attack cannot be dismissed as just another peevish argument about styles and reputations. He is out for far bigger game—the kind of trophy he successfully carried off in his celebrated portrait of *Radical Chic*—and while he does not, I think, score quite the same success in *The Painted Word*, for reasons that are worth exploring, it would be foolish indeed to pretend that he has not caught hold of a fairly sizable carcass. About art, modernist or otherwise, Wolfe appears to know next to nothing. But about manners and the volatile ethos of our cultural life, he knows a great deal—as much, in my opinion, as anyone now writing—and he brings a buccaneer's audacity to anatomizing the secret scenarios of hypocrisy and pretension that govern the social and intellectual existence of the "advanced" middle class—precisely the class that gave to the votaries of the avant-garde their conspicuous and protracted purchase on our cultural affairs. His sense of timing, moreover, is flawless. If, as I believe, *The Painted Word* announces that this class has now suffered a surfeit of interest in the avant-garde phenomenon and is in the process of withdrawing assent from the more opprobrious, obscurantist, and addlebrained fruits of its endeavors, then that is news of considerable import. For it means that the "scene" inaugurated by the Pop Art antics of the 60's—not just a style of painting and sculpture, which has, in any event, long since passed into eclipse as an artistic force, but the whole movement that saw swingers of every variety commandeer the institutions of the avant-garde and swiftly transform them into a raucous and conscienceless parody of the once lofty intentions of the avant-garde—has passed into limbo, and the class to whose needs and illusions it ministered is busily nursing a gigantic historical hangover.

Tom Wolfe and his famous style—"Hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia, hernia," etc., to quote from the opening words of *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (1965)—are themselves the offspring of this discotheque culture, and this places him at a certain disadvantage in dealing with anything that occurred in the art world before the dawn of the Pop Art era. He writes, so to speak, from inside the bubble, and this inevitably gives him a distorted perspective on everything that occupies a place in the historical distance. At the same time—and this is distinctly *not* a disadvantage for a chronicler of manners—he sees all of modernist art exactly as the new swinging audience that came to it in the 60's saw it: through the lens of the Pop scene, with its instant reputations and carnival changes of fortune, whence everyone and everything—art and artist, critic and criticism, collector and dealer and museum curator and the various powers they wield—are perceived as little more than magical counters in a game of money, status, and fash-

* The article is to be published in book form next month by Farrar, Straus & Giroux under the same title, *The Painted Word*, 128 pp., $5.95.

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ion. He sees it, in other words, exclusively as a form of chic.

And that, really, is what *The Painted Word* is about: avant-garde chic in the 60's. Its ostensible focus, however, is not on the art itself, but on the criticism written about it, and this unexpected emphasis—on, as the title indicates, *words* rather than on pictures—allows him to engage in a good deal of high-handed comedy at the expense of the ideas and the personalities that have dominated the discussion of modernist art in this country for a generation or more. It also gives him immediate access to the larger public that knows nothing about modernist art but knows what is rumored to have been said on its behalf, and is alternately irritated, incredulous, and angry that anything serious and "deep" should be said on behalf of a body of work so remote from commonsense notions of urgent human expression. To turn the language of criticism into a form of social farce is not in itself a formidable task: the solemnities of criticism often meet the satirist more than halfway in providing the materials of comedy, and it does not require any special gift to isolate what is patently absurd in its more hermetic disquisitions. But Wolfe once again carries all this a step further than expected: he makes the critics themselves—principally Clement Greenberg, but also Harold Rosenberg and Leo Steinberg—not only figures of fun but (worst insult of all!) fiercely competitive *apparatchiks* in the bureaucracy of chic. In Wolfe's scenario of the contemporary art scene, theory—ever more elaborate, ever more demanding, ever more jealous of its prerogatives—casts its infamous spell over every endeavor. "Theories? They were more than theories, they were mental constructs. No, more than that even . . . veritable edifices behind the eyeballs they were . . . castles in the cortex . . . mezuzahs on the pyramids of Betz . . . crystalline . . . comparable in their bizarre refinements to medieval Scholasticism."

According to *The Painted Word*, these "edifices behind the eyeballs" constructed by Greenberg, *et al.*, constitute the first cause of what artists do, what collectors and museums favor with their money and attention, what you and I see, or think we see, when we look at the results, and, most important, what the people Wolfe calls "Le Chic," or alternately (reaching into Mencken's old phrase book), "*le monde*, the culturati," will lavish with their golden publicity and patronage. By combining, collage-fashion, oddments of gossip and invidious speculation of the sort usually confined to cocktail parties and museum openings with tag ends of quotations and bits of potted history, Wolfe constructs a social comedy in which critics issue their absurd fiats and artists hustle to carry them out to the letter until the day dawns when a new generation of artists—seeing where the real power lies—stages a coup, takes over the reins of theory, and exposes the aging theoreticians of earlier days as passé.

Some of this is very amusing, and the general attitude of skepticism and suspicion that Wolfe brings to the subject—the suspicion that something more than disinterested aesthetic inquiry may be at work in this labor of critical theory—is both well-deserved and overdue.* He has a particularly wicked eye for those moments when the ante is abruptly raised in the avant-garde sweepstakes by hungry newcomers to the scene, thereby calling the bluff of the "advanced" theories of the reigning mandarins and instantly revealing them to be establishmentarians with vested territories to protect. Thus, on the *Kulturkampf* staged by the firebrands of Minimalism in the 1960's, Wolfe writes:

> Faster and faster art theory flew now, in ever-tighter and more dazzling turns. It was dizzying, so much so that both Greenberg and Rosenberg were shocked—*épatés*. Greenberg accused the Minimalists of living for "the far-out as an end in itself." Their work was "too much a feat of ideation . . . something deduced instead of felt or discovered." A little late to be saying that, Clement! Rosenberg tried to stop them by saying they really weren't far-out at all—they were a fake avant-garde, a mere "DMZ vanguard," a buffer between the *real* avant-garde (his boy de Kooning) and the mass media. Very subtle—and absolutely hopeless, Harold! Theory, with a head of its own now, spun on and chewed up the two old boys like breadsticks, like the Revolution devouring Robespierre and Danton—faster and faster—in ever-tighter and more dazzling turns—let's see, we just got rid of the little rows of *hung pictures*, not to mention a couple of superannuated critics, and we've gotten rid of illusion, representational objects, the third dimension, pigment (or most of it), brushstrokes, and now frames and canvas—but what about the wall itself? What about the very idea of a work of art as something "on a wall" at all? How very pre-Modern!

Wolfe is very sharp, too, on catching critics out on those minute adjustments they sometimes make in amending their pronouncements in order to protect their reputations. Thus, about Leo Steinberg's rhapsodic discovery of Jasper Johns, Wolfe notes the following little hedge:

> As soon as he realized what Johns's work meant, said Steinberg, "the pictures of de Kooning and Kline, it seemed to me, were suddenly tossed into one pot with Rembrandt and Giotto. All alike suddenly became painters of illusion." Later on Steinberg changed that to "Watteau and Giotto"; perhaps for the crazy trans-lingual rhyme, which, I must say, I like . . . or perhaps because being tossed into the same pot with

* Regarding Wolfe's questioning of the pieties of this criticism or the avant-garde mythology on which it is based, I myself, as the author of *The Age of the Avant-Garde*, feel a bit like Bertrand Russell who, in acknowledging receipt of a book by C. E. M. Joad, wrote: "Dear Joad, I would praise your new book, but modesty forbids." But Wolfe is, undeniably, the first to turn the subject into outright comedy.

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Rembrandt, even by Leo Steinberg, was a fate that any artist, de Kooning included, might not mind terribly.

All this is, as I say, amusing and well-deserved, and it remains amusing so long as Wolfe addresses himself to the world he knows best—the world of chic, and the scramble for fame, money, influence, and sheer visibility that makes that particular world go 'round. Wolfe knows exactly what the role of highbrow theorizing, the role of *mind*, is in that world, and the exact rewards it brings to the happy few—whether artists or critics or collectors—who become the beneficiaries of what he aptly describes as its "art-mating ritual." "The artist's payoff in this ritual," he writes, "is obvious enough. He stands to gain precisely what Freud says are the goals of the artist: fame, money, and beautiful lovers." And for the collectors who hand over the large sums of money for the art certified by all this critical cerebration? "What's in it for them?" Wolfe asks, and he gives the best answer I have ever seen:

> Today there is a peculiarly modern reward that the avant-garde artist can give his benefactor: namely, the feeling that he, like his mate the artist, is separate from and aloof from the bourgeoisie, the middle classes . . . the feeling that he may be *from* the middle class but he is no longer *in* it . . . the feeling that he is a fellow soldier, or at least an aide-de-camp or an honorary cong guerrilla in the vanguard march through the land of the philistines. This is a peculiarly modern need and a peculiarly modern kind of salvation (from the sin of Too Much Money) and something quite common among the well-to-do all over the West, in Rome and Milan as well as New York. That is why collecting contemporary art, the leading edge, the latest thing, warm and wet from the loft, appeals specifically to those who feel most uneasy about their own commercial wealth . . . Avant-garde art, more than any other, takes the Mammon and the Moloch out of money, puts Levis, turtlenecks, muttonchops, and other mantles and laurels of bohemian grace upon it.

All of this is in a class with *Radical Chic*, for it addresses itself to the same kind of material: the secret life of the bourgeois psyche, and the marriage of manners and ideology it exacts—the historic vulnerability of the prosperous middle class to any pressure that threatens to expose its lack of perfect alignment with the fashions of the day. (Is it to the dynamic of capitalism, and to the rootlessness and restlessness that its upward mobility induces, that the middle class owes this vulnerability to chic? It would be interesting to know, though a serious account of middle-class society is about the last thing one can expect from the academic historians of the present day: they tend, if I may borrow a phrase, to be part of the problem rather than of the solution.) The kind of cowardice—not only about aesthetics, but about politics and morals as well—that this fear of appearing out-of-date and out-of-style breeds in the middle class—a fear of appearing illiberal in the eyes of one's contemporaries and ridiculous in the eye of history—is, of course, one of the traditional subjects of bourgeois comedy, and it is a subject that Wolfe handles with great finesse. Who will ever forget those "Roquefort cheese morsels rolled in crushed nuts" ("It's the way the dry sackiness of the nuts tiptoes up against the dour savor of the cheese that is so nice, so subtle") that usher us into the scene in Leonard Bernstein's living room where the Black Panthers are being entertained by the *haut monde*? Wolfe is without peer in detailing the world in which the cultivated middle class acts out its elaborate comedies of conformism to whatever taste—"in" taste, "advanced" taste, the taste that distinguishes it from the common herd—requires of it, whether it is a passing political alliance with its own worst enemies or a more benign commitment to far-out styles of painting.

WHEN it comes to the analysis of ideas, however, when it comes down to actual works of art and the thinking they both embody and inspire, Wolfe is hopelessly out of his depth. So long as he is dealing with the theory and practice of art as a comedy of manners, he is illuminating and often hilarious. But a reading of *The Painted Word* suggests that it is *only* as a comedy of manners that these subjects exist for him. He has no real grasp of their inner substance, and he has no language, in any case, in which they can be accurately discussed. The principal reason why *The Painted Word* fails to repeat the success of *Radical Chic* is that its subject requires, as *Radical Chic* did not, an effort of historical exposition and critical explication that is beyond Wolfe's powers (and, no doubt, beyond his true interests). In this realm, he is obliged to rely on secondhand observation and hearsay evidence, and these prove insufficient, to say the least. *The Painted Word* is a relatively short text, but it has its longueurs wherever the history of either an idea or an aesthetic impulse must be recounted, for these take place offstage, in regions of the mind unfrequented by this expert voyeur of "*le monde*" and effectively closed to the world of chic until the moment when an idea-whose-time-has-come suddenly emerges, at which point, more often than not, it has already been sadly diluted, distorted, and vulgarized. This vulgarization is, to be sure, a proper subject for comedy, but to mistake it for the real thing—as Wolfe so often does—is also comic, and in a way he does not intend.

Wolfe has some merry moments with Harold Rosenberg, for example, and it would require a more saintly immunity to the emotion of *Schadenfreude* than it is within my power to muster not to feel that the ridicule is eminently well-earned. But in the end Wolfe is unable to deal either with Rosenberg's career or with his ideas. He correctly

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recognizes that the term "Action Painting" became, as he says, "the single most famous phrase of the period," and—always alert to internecine jealousies—that this was "a fact that did not please Greenberg." Wolfe is amusing, too, about the preposterous image of the painter that emerges from Rosenberg's famous essay on "The American Action Painters"—"a Promethean artist gorged with emotion and overloaded with paint, hurling himself and his brushes at the canvas as if in hand-to-hand combat with Fate"—but he does not really grasp that the autogenous phrase on which Rosenberg's entire career as an art critic was founded was a fraud from the outset. "At a certain moment the canvas began to appear to one American painter after another as an arena in which to act—rather than as a space in which to reproduce, re-design, analyze or 'express' an object, actual or imagined," the famous passage reads. "What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event." Yet these non-pictorial "events"—the residue of an "action" alleged to be devoid of conscious aesthetic intention—somehow managed to be exhibited and looked at and bought and sold and coveted and written about—by, among others, Harold Rosenberg in the pages of the *New Yorker*—as if they really *were* pictures. Rosenberg himself even managed to acquire a sufficient quantity of these "events" to exhibit his private collection of them in a museum just the way you or I would exhibit our collections of pictures. How interesting it would be to know if the insurance coverage of that exhibition was for "pictures" or for "events": one of the many comic details attaching to this career that Wolfe has missed out on.

The whole concept of "Action" was, alas, a complete fiction, an aborted attempt to confer the luster of an Existentialist ethic—an aura of Sartrean authenticity—on an essentially aesthetic enterprise. "The new painting has broken down every distinction between art and life," we were told in this same essay, and yet in real life, where artists (even "Action painters") die and bequeath estates and their work becomes the object of investment analysts and the subject of protracted litigation, the distinction somehow persisted. It was the art rather than the life, after all, that brought all those record prices at Parke-Bernet auctions and turned whole areas of the New York gallery world into an obscene money market: a subject you will not find much discussed in the column called "The Art World" that Rosenberg writes in the *New Yorker*. But then, the art world discussed in that column is a curiously truncated version of the one most of us see with our eyes week after week. Exhibitions great and small fill the galleries and museums season upon season, but only the very few that lend themselves to the purposes of ideology—to renewing the romance of "Action" art as the latest and the last avowal of the myth of the avant-garde—are ever acknowledged and dilated upon. By now, the concept of "Action" has acquired in Rosenberg's universe of discourse a status comparable to that enjoyed by the concept of the Trinity in certain works of theology: it is the vehicle by means of which all contradictions of logic and evidence are rhetorically reconciled.

Rosenberg is a particularly egregious example of the critic as ideologue, trimming every aesthetic reality to fit the procrustean bed of an adored myth. In his latest collection of essays, *Discovering the Present*,* he reprints without embarrassment yet another affirmation of the myth—the piece called, simply, "The Avant-Garde"—in which he blithely repeats the notion that "The chief antagonist of the avant-garde is the middle class," overlooking for the moment that this very discourse was written on invitation, in 1969, for a poshy anthology, entitled *Quality*, destined for the Christmas trees and the coffee tables of the class he heaps with scorn: which is to say, the class to which he belongs. (And what class is it, I wonder, that Rosenberg imagines he writes for in the pages of the *New Yorker*? The proletariat?) This, too, would be comic if it were not part of the tragedy of the intellectual life of our time that refuses to acknowledge, in its high-flown social and cultural formulations, the fundamental conditions of its own existence.

WOLFE is no better, either, in dealing with the career or the writings of Clement Greenberg. (As for Leo Steinberg, even Wolfe must be aware that this writer is entirely marginal to the subject, introduced for purely dramaturgical reasons. Steinberg's is the case of a professor on holiday, enjoying an occasional fling in the demimonde of new aesthetic experience, but at home only in the world where reputations are already certified by tradition.) Wolfe does not understand that whereas Rosenberg's criticism belongs only to the ideological superstructure of the art world, Greenberg's belongs, like it or not, to art history—to the making of art as well as to the making of reputations. Even about the latter, Wolfe is curiously ignorant. That Greenberg's ideas wield immense influence over sizable cadres of critics and curators and collectors and dealers and *artists*, and that these ideas are as influential as they are not only because they now bear a demonstrable relation to monetary reward and worldly prestige but because they answer to some fundamental yearning of modernist sensibility, Wolfe seems totally unable to comprehend. He makes great sport of the issue of "flatness" in painting, one of Greenberg's cardinal tenets, apparently unaware that this was a crucial issue for the critics of Gauguin and Puvis de Chavannes—to go no further back in history than that. He has a lot of fun with the concept of "purity" in Greenberg's criticism—but can he really be dumb to the knowledge that this has been one of the central aesthet-

* University of Chicago Press, 348 pp., $10.95.

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ic ideals of modernism at least since Mallarmé? The truth is, it is no more absurd to invoke the "flatness" of the picture plane in speaking of painting than it is to discuss the aesthetic viability of the iambic line in poetry or the diatonic scale in music: these are the recognized modalities of artistic expression. In all such matters, Tom Wolfe simply shows himself to be a stranger to the ordinary distinctions of criticism—a stranger, indeed, to the experience of the art that forms his subject.

For this reason, I suppose, he has no notion of what the case against Greenberg's aesthetic really consists of. Greenberg is a formalist who has seized upon one of the essential imperatives of modernist sensibility—the impulse to isolate and aggrandize the purely aesthetic attributes of style, to identify them as entirely coextensive with their technical realization, and thus to elevate them as the true subject-matter, the only permissible subject-matter, of art—and has effectively attached this idea to a dialectic of art history derived from the mechanisms of Marxist teleology. This formalist aesthetic is persuasive for the very reason that it allows its adherents to strip the artistic enterprise of everything that might complicate or compromise its headlong pursuit of an ever more specialized ratification of its own ends. It keeps all intercourse with common experience in abeyance, substituting "laws" of its own for the more familiar empathies of human exchange, and does so in the name of an impersonal history not susceptible to accidents of feeling or taste.

But it is, of course, only a mode of taste itself, and one that expresses, in its larger implications, a profound distaste for the world it inhabits. This is the source of its powerful appeal—that it shuts out the world, in all its imperfections and vulgarities and commonplace emotions, and offers us instead an aesthetic utopia in which nothing that is merely contingent need ever be considered in the human equation. It makes of art exactly what Mallarmé dreamed of—an alternative universe in which all quotidian realities are dissolved into the vapors of aesthetic sensation and all earthly pain triumphantly transmuted into the untroubled pleasures of the mind.

To reject this aesthetic is to reject something fundamental in the high culture of the modern age, and that is a task not lightly undertaken. Which is the reason why the attacks on this formalist aesthetic tend to be picayune and unpersuasive, confined to local arguments over particular artists and styles and reputations and rarely, if ever, addressed to the fundamental issue of what, precisely, we want and need the function of art to be in the world that encloses our workaday lives.

But to discuss the problem in terms such as these carries us well beyond the drawing-room comedy of *The Painted Word*. In Tom Wolfe's world, it is comical even to entertain a theory of art, comical perhaps even to create a work of art that attempts to modify consciousness and alter our view of experience. It is this fundamental incomprehension of the role of criticism in the life of art—this enmity to the function of theory in the creation of culture—that identifies *The Painted Word*, despite its knowingness and its fun, as a philistine utterance, an act of revenge against a quality of mind it cannot begin to encompass and must therefore treat as a preposterous joke.

THE case for the function of criticism in our culture has been made many times, and never better, I think, than when Henry James wrote:

> Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints; and there is a presumption that those times when no one has anything particular to say about it, and has no reason to give for practice or preference, though they may be times of honor, are not times of development—are times, possibly even, a little of dullness. The successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, but the theory too is interesting; and though there is a great deal of the latter without the former I suspect there has never been a genuine success that has not had a latent core of conviction. Discussion, suggestion, formulation, these things are fertilizing when they are frank and sincere.

It is, I think, because we are no longer certain that the higher criticism of art is entirely "frank and sincere"—because we suspect that its relation to money and the market and the kind of social ambition so expertly delineated in *The Painted Word* has compromised its essential disinterestedness—that the revenge of the philistines will now find a receptive audience, not only outside the art world but within it as well. We seem, in any event, to be at the end of a period in art criticism, if not in art itself. If one looks these days into a journal like *Artforum*, which, month after month, year after year, during the 1960's, published quantities of the most learned and disputatious formalist criticism, one finds that it is the sociology of the art world that now commands the greatest interest. Not the aesthetics of contemporary art, but its socialization is the issue of the moment—which is another confirmation that the so-called "vanguard" is in the process of peaceful assimilation. If the age of criticism is coming to an end in the art world, it is for the same reason that the age of criticism in the literary world—the New Criticism—came to an end a generation ago: its task has been completed, it has placed us in possession of the essential issues raised by the art in question, and no longer seems to have any pressing functions to perform. In this sense, perhaps, *The Painted Word* is a comic epitaph to a bygone era.

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Was the Holocaust Predictable?

Jacob Katz

ALMOST ANYONE who lived through the period of the Holocaust, observing it from either near or far, will readily testify that information concerning the Nazi murder of the Jews, when it first came out, seemed absolutely unbelievable—impossible. In retrospect, however, as we look back on the exact sequence of events that led to the tragedy, we tend to conceive of it as the culmination of a predetermined and unavoidable march of destiny. Such a complete turnabout in our attitude to past events is hardly unique, but in the case of the Holocaust the contradiction is an especially flagrant one because the contradictory attitudes are so emphatic. The enormity of the crime being committed by the Nazis, as intelligence of it began to filter into the countries outside the occupied areas, placed it beyond belief. Yet once it became evident that the unbelievable had indeed occurred, it began to seem altogether necessary and inevitable. Now the question, often put in a self-torturing way, is, how could we have overlooked the signs that unmistakably foretold the impending tragedy?

This query reaches out to different dimensions of the past. The prehistory of Nazidom as well as the first years of Hitler's regime have been scrutinized by historians for signs indicating a readiness on the part of the Nazi movement to implement a program of destruction, or a resolve on the part of Hitler to carry out such a program in the simple, physical sense. Next, the spotlight has been turned on German anti-Semitism of the last decades of the 19th century, and its forerunners in the romantic nationalism of the early 19th century, there to detect the seeds of Nazism and its ideology of Jew-hatred. Some have gone further, attempting an analysis of the German mentality as reflected in typical representatives of the German *Geist* like Luther, Hegel, Wagner, or Nietzsche, and meaning to reveal an innate tendency toward tyranny, totalitarianism, and social intolerance. Indeed, the inquiring mind has not stopped at the German border. The teachings of the Christian churches since the Middle Ages, and Jewish-Gentile relations since antiquity, have been examined for an answer to the frightening riddle of the present. Though a connection between past history and the climax represented by the Holocaust has not always been explicitly asserted, virtually no contemporary historical, sociological, or philosophical analysis of early anti-Semitism ignores the symbolical presence of the six million dead of Auschwitz and Treblinka.

Now, remoteness in time does not of itself exclude a possible connection between two phenomena, and there can be no doubt that the history of Jewish-Gentile relations since antiquity does have a bearing on the Holocaust—in what sense, we shall explore later on. Still, the antinomy persists between the feeling of having been taken by surprise by the events of the Holocaust when they occurred and the inclination, after the fact, to reconstruct those events in such a way as to make them appear inevitable. This antinomy is often overcome by asserting that some people, at least, *had* foreseen the events in question, but their warnings went unheeded.

In 1945, when the horrors of the Holocaust were already fully known, I heard Arnold Zweig quoting what he himself had told the Zionist leader Menahem M. Ussishkin during a visit to Jerusalem in 1932, when the ascendance of Hitler seemed imminent—namely, that this would lead to the total destruction of German Jewry. Yet the book written by Arnold Zweig shortly after Hitler's rise to power, *Bilanz der deutschen Judenheit* ["The Balance Sheet of German Jewry"] attests that his real views at the time were not so clear-cut. Zweig did fear the downfall of German Jewry, and saw a danger to leftist intellectuals like himself, but he believed that a man like Martin Buber still had a chance to fight for the ideal of religious socialism in Germany, and Zweig strongly enjoined Buber to continue his work. Zweig himself left Berlin and settled in Haifa in 1934; from Palestine he commented (in the newly-published correspondence between him and Sigmund Freud) on the events in Europe, taking every setback in Hitler's advance as a sure sign of his pending downfall. In quoting what he later claimed he had said to Ussishkin, I am by no

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means suggesting that Zweig in 1945 was not telling the truth. What often occurs in such cases is that statements uttered under certain circumstances assume, in retrospect, a weight they were far from having carried in their original setting.

Vladimir Jabotinsky, leader of "right-wing" Zionism in the pre-State era, is often credited by his followers with having had a remarkable prescience of the catastrophe awaiting European Jewry; it is he who is said to have coined the phrase, "Liquidate the *Galut* [Diaspora] or the *Galut* will liquidate you." Indeed, rereading Jabotinsky's speeches from the years preceding World War II, one comes across sentence after sentence that sounds like an apprehension of coming doom. But what did these warnings mean in their original context? This great patriot tried to prod his audience into a more activist Zionist stance than the Jewish leadership at the time thought possible, or even contemplated. In the late 30's he urged the "evacuation" of Polish Jewry, and would not have hesitated to enlist the help of the anti-Semitic Polish government in implementing his plan. Jabotinsky pointed to the plight of German Jewry, then leaving Germany because of the pressure of anti-Jewish legislation, as evidence of the urgent necessity of his scheme, and he used phrases that seem to us to indicate foreknowledge of the Holocaust.

But what Jabotinsky actually had in mind in speaking of a worsening of the Jewish position was the aggravation of economic, social, and political measures against the Jewish community in Poland itself, not the possible conquest of Poland by the Nazis. Together with many Jewish intellectuals he shared a conviction that Nazi rule was fragile and would crumble through internal difficulties or at the first clash with a foreign power. How unaware he was of even the near future is clearly demonstrated in the very idea of "evacuation": he suggested transferring a million-and-a-half Polish Jews to Palestine over the course of the next ten years. Jabotinsky's vision, inspired though it was by a deep passion for the welfare of his people, was as limited as anyone's by the impenetrability of the future.

Analysis of these two instances confirms once again the intrinsic dichotomy between past and future: only in retrospect do statements made about the future assume the nature of prophecy. Nevertheless, instead of solving our problem, this observation only succeeds in placing it in sharper focus. Why should human reason be incapable of reaching a proper conclusion about the logic of events in advance of their culmination? Why did no one realize that European Jewry was doomed, as we today, looking back, know it to have been? Are contemporaries to be blamed? This last question hovers over many partisan deliberations concerning the period, and in fact blame has often been explicitly assigned to groups or individuals that supposedly could have foreseen events and taken appropriate steps to forestall or prevent them. Blame is also implicit in many historical works of simple narrative that cannot avoid casting pitying glances at those contemporaries who ignored the warning signals that seem so crystal-clear to the historian. But in both cases there is a failure to consider adequately the intrinsic limitations—epistemological and psychological—of historical prediction.

II

Up to January 1933 one could know only that Hitler might come to power, one could not know that he *would*—even though, in retrospect, the historian may present the Fuehrer's accession as a chain of events following each other with the force of inevitable necessity. In November 1932, Hitler's fate still seemed to depend on the votes of millions, and indeed the elections of that month indicated a diminishing trend in his popular support. The economic crisis, one of the main factors through which Nazi propaganda appealed to adherents, had passed its peak; the number of unemployed was clearly decreasing. There were defections from the party and Hitler was having difficulty keeping it solvent and retaining his authority over the various internal groupings. That power fell into his hands nevertheless was due to the condition of the other political parties in Germany, which, split between the Left and the Right, were incapable of establishing a working majority. It was at this juncture that President Hindenburg charged Hitler with forming a coalition government together with the non-Nazi right wing, which accepted the deal out of the belief that it could keep him in check.

In retrospect Hindenburg's decision to call upon Hitler to form a government is rightly regarded by historians as one of the most fateful decisions not only in the history of Germany and of the Jewish people, but also in the history of the world community. Yet the very expression "fateful" indicates that the full significance of the step was bound up with its future consequences. Contemporaries may have felt it to be decisive but could only speculate where it might lead. Some leftist intellectuals, it is worth remembering, conspicuously represented by Jews like Leopold Schwarzschild, the editor of the influential *Tagebuch*, had long recommended that Hitler be allowed to come to power and thus be given the opportunity to fail and seal his doom. But even disregarding such fancies (typical of the too-clever intellectuals), the significance of the event could only be assessed according to what was inherent in it in its time.

This was momentous enough, to be sure. The Nazi accession to power meant the domination of Germany by a party that denied the principles on which the former government and the established

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order had been founded: the principles of democracy, parliamentarianism, racial tolerance, and equality before the law. Instead, the Nazi party avowed the principle of leadership, i.e., government by a self-appointed elite that owed allegiance to one man whose command was law, and this man had given indication enough of his irrational visions and his passionate hatred of his enemies, among whom the Jews bulked most largely. Even so, public declarations by even the most revolutionary parties have never been taken as actual guidelines to be used in implementing practical policies, and in this case even those who supported Hitler very often did so with the tacit assumption that although he might indeed reverse some of the trends of postwar Germany, he would relinquish his more radical ambitions and become more restrained as he assumed responsibility for the conduct of affairs of state.

III

How could people have been so foolish as not to have seen what was in store for them at the hands of Adolf Hitler? After all, he did nothing but execute what he had said he would do, in so many words, in *Mein Kampf*. The answer to this frequently asked question is not that people did not read the Fuehrer's voluminous treatise; whether they did or not, there was ample opportunity to learn his declared intentions through other channels during the propaganda years and from occasional utterances during the first years of his rule. Nor does the answer lie in the well-documented phenomenon of partial apperception or the selective acceptance of what reaches one's senses and understanding—although this does go a long way toward explaining the seemingly faulty response to received stimuli. The fact is that an essential difference exists between announcing an intention and resolving to act upon it. Nobody, including Hitler himself, could know whether he would ever have the opportunity to carry out his intentions and how far he would go. Only in retrospect does this essential difference tend to become blurred, and thereby contribute again to misjudgments of the past.

This whole complex of problems can be illuminated by an episode during Hitler's bid for power. In the winter of 1926 an exclusive club of well-to-do, conservative-minded citizens of Hamburg, the *Nationalklub*, invited Hitler to give an address on his political philosophy. Hitler was then in the first stages of reorganizing the party after the failure of the 1923 putsch, which had landed him in prison and placed him in temporary political eclipse. He was not yet free to make public speeches everywhere in Germany but had succeeded in attracting attention as a consistent opponent of the ruling parties of the country and, indeed, a radical detractor of the republic itself; in that respect he conformed to the principles avowed by the members of Hamburg's *Nationalklub*. His two-and-a-half hour speech to the club was taken down in stenogram, but remained unpublished until 1960. As Professor Werner Jochmann, who edited the text, has observed, it is a most revealing document, not only for what it shows about Hitlerite propaganda, but even more for the way in which that propaganda was received. In his speech Hitler attributed the weakness of postwar Germany exclusively to the influence of Marxism, which, he held, had undermined the former strength of the country, and the eradication of which he saw as the highest national goal, worthy of the support of his listeners. The Hamburg patricians shared with Hitler a resentment of the prevailing social-democratic order, although few if any of them could have wished to replace it with an even more radical order, of an even less aristocratic character; nevertheless a common ground was created between them, enabling the speaker to secure the future support of at least some members of his audience.

Now, Hitler's speech as it has been analyzed by Professor Jochmann clearly reveals all the radical elements of his program and points the way to its execution. Properly understood, the speech should have frightened away the conservative audience of the *Nationalklub*. Professor Jochmann, puzzled by the divergence between what the speech contained and what the audience apparently took from it, theorizes that the listeners paid attention only to what was in harmony with what they themselves felt and thought but neglected and overlooked what would have repelled them had they understood it properly. This explanation may be correct as far as it goes; the trouble with it is that it draws once again on a knowledge of events since 1926 and attributes to Hitler's words a weight absorbed, so to speak, from later history. Thus, for example, although Jews are not mentioned in the speech at all, one cannot help thinking gruesomely of Auschwitz as one reads Hitler's remarks on the Darwinian struggle between the strong and the weak, and his assertion of the natural right of the former to overpower and eliminate the latter. Yet this, from the historian's view, is an impermissible predating of notions and events. We may well recognize in the Hamburg speech the *potentiality* of Hitler's later deeds, but we must not disregard the ever-present fact of contingency, on which the realization of his intentions rested.

IV

To deny the possibility of foreseeing the course of events is not to imply there is no way of assessing a situation and its potential dangers in a more or less intelligent fashion. Such an appraisal has to be based on an analysis of factors at work in the present that take into account the chance of possible shifts and

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changes in the future. In the case of German Jewry, obviously no real agreement was reached either on a diagnosis of the situation or on a prescription for action. Contradictory recommendations were made and conflicting decisions taken by different people on the basis of their respective evaluations of the situation: to emigrate or not to emigrate, choosing instead to weather the storm until the Nazis moderated their attitude toward the Jews or fell from power; to cooperate with the regime in order to facilitate emigration and save as many Jewish possessions as possible—the line taken by the official leadership of the Jewish Agency—or to support instead a worldwide boycott of German wares in order to hasten an economic debacle—the passionately defended position of the Revisionists. The records of the Nazi period, especially in its later phases of ghettoization and deportation, are full of even more frightful dilemmas; in extreme cases the decision to send some people to death in the hope of saving others depended upon an assessment of what was in store for all concerned.

The historian who wishes faithfully to record and judge the struggle of those involved has first of all to explain people's behavior on the basis of what they themselves knew at the time; whether a particular decision was rational, judicious, moral, must be determined by whatever yardstick the participants themselves would have been ready to submit to. Naturally, people will be found to have acted on different levels of rationality, and where moral considerations are involved, they will be found to have possessed different degrees of courage and character. But moral judgment can only be pronounced on individuals when we have fully imagined the plight they were in, and that is why any such moral judgment has to be preceded by a reconstruction of the situation as exact as the historical sources will permit. To my mind the basic fault of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* lies in her having skipped the stage of historical reconstruction in her rush to pass judgment on the actors. Lacking a concrete conception of what happened, and exploiting the wisdom of hindsight, she assumed a stance of moral superiority to which nobody who was not tested in the situation could possibly have a claim.

The behavior of individuals is not the only object of the historian's judgment, nor is the yardstick always a moral one. Even in the most extreme situation in the ghettos it was not only individual character that determined who elected to go along passively with events as they unfolded and who joined the underground, vowing to go down fighting. Degrees and kinds of education, religiosity, social and political aspiration, made the difference between passivity and quietism on the one hand, activism and initiative on the other.

This rule applies with even greater force to earlier stages, when the depth of one's insight into the texture of the situation determined which course of action was decided upon. Here too group mentality was just as powerful a factor as individual character. There were, for example, the attempts by rightists like Max Naumann and Hans Joachim Schoeps to be accepted by the Nazis by virtue of their espousal of a Germanic *Weltanschauung*—attempts which may be dismissed today as autistic self-deception (quite apart from what they may have entailed by way of disloyalty to other Jewish groups). At the other end of the spectrum, the leftist intellectuals represented by the Frankfurt school, committed as they were to a Marxist interpretation of history, could conceive the Nazi ascendance only as an aberration of social forces, and were entirely blind to the role played by the defamation of Jews in Nazi ideology and politics. I may in this context adduce something from my own experience. In 1932, I was preparing my doctoral thesis at Frankfurt university under the guidance of Karl Mannheim, the sociologist. Mannheim did not actually belong to the Frankfurt Institute but was personally and ideologically an integral part of the group. Apprehensive lest my studies at the university be terminated because I was a Jewish foreigner, Mannheim urged me to complete my thesis and be examined for the degree before the end of the academic year. As to his own position, he remarked that the Nazis would not dare touch incumbents of full professorships. By April of the same year, when the purging of academic institutions began, Mannheim was one of the first to be thrown out. I may add, with no intention of irony, that some years later, having found refuge at the London School of Economics, Mannheim wrote his *Diagnosis of Our Time*, in which he exposed the underlying forces that led to the Nazi takeover and regime.

V

Rootedness in Jewish consciousness was certainly a help in orienting oneself to the new situation. At least it protected one from despair—the suicide rate was conspicuously high in assimilated circles that suddenly found their world in a shambles. After the first shock was overcome, the Orthodox and the Zionists, on the other hand, tried to make the best of things. German Jewry experienced a kind of cultural regeneration, a marked increase in literary and educational activity that dwindled only when continuous emigration had sapped the available forces and the Nazis put an end to even these signs of Jewish public life. The Zionist movement in particular drew many formerly indifferent Jews into its orbit, not only because it offered a way of escape to Palestine, but because its ideology came closest to offering a cogent analysis of the situation that had evolved: The exclusion of Jews from German society seemed to demonstrate unequivocally the error of assimilationist ideologies.

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The congruence between the Zionist interpretation of Jewish history and the existing circumstances lasted, however, only as long as Nazi persecutions kept within the bounds of prior historical experience. The historian Yitzhak F. Baer, who left Germany for Jerusalem as early as 1930, had an opportunity to ponder from a distance the significance of what was happening in his country of origin. The result was a short book, *Galut*, written during the first two years of the Nazi regime: an in-depth analysis of the concept of Exile since early antiquity. Baer concluded his analysis by observing, "We today can read each coming day's events in ancient and dusty chronological tables, as though history were the ceaseless unrolling of a process proclaimed once and for all in the Bible." As the preeminent historian of Spanish Jewry, Baer may well have been reminded by events in Germany of the fate that had overtaken Spanish Jews five hundred years before. Such an analogy was painful, but at the same time it could also have a soothing effect: one was entering upon a prescribed course that followed an inherent pattern in Jewish history.

This, at any rate, was a possible mental response to events in the mid-30's when the forced displacement of German Jews from their position raised an apprehension of their ultimate expulsion. In the ensuing years, however, as the waves of persecution mounted and especially when the frightful information about the ghettos and death camps began to reach the outside world, it was suddenly realized that events had transcended all the old, wonted concepts deriving from historical experience. To Auschwitz and Treblinka there was no historical analogy, no philosophical or, for that matter, theological, framework in which they might be accommodated. This was an absolute *novum*, unassimilable in any vocabulary at the disposal of the generation that experienced it. And it remains so to this day, despite the tremendous effort to investigate all its aspects: the historical, the philosophical, and the theological. Whatever subsequent generations will make of it, for the generation that lived through it the Holocaust can only be characterized as a trauma, a wounding experience beyond the reach of intellectual conceptualization.

VI

GIVEN THE radically transcendent nature of the Holocaust, what significance can there be to the mere historical recording of its events, let alone attempting to lay bare their roots in the more or less remote past? What enlightenment can we possibly derive from tracing the history of anti-Semitism, or Jewish-Christian relations in past centuries, if indeed the Holocaust has to be conceived of as an absolute *novum*, unparalleled in previous generations? And what is the use of rehearsing these horrors in historical retrospect? Is it not a kind of masochism, a form of useless penitence for not having shared the fate of the victims?

The Holocaust *was* something new, unexpected even by those well acquainted with the history of Jewish sufferings in the past. The long-standing Christian depreciation of whatever pertained to Jews and Judaism is not enough in itself to explain it. Neither is the special record of Jewish-Gentile relations in modern Germany, burdened as it was by the super-national self-esteem of the German people, and the racial defamation of Jews. All these factors, even taken together, were not necessarily destined to produce the Holocaust. Nevertheless, the fact that a later event is not the necessary result of previous ones does not mean there are no relations between them. The Holocaust, produced through unforeseen and unforeseeable historical process, absorbed into itself all these previous elements, without whose existence the later phases of the process would have been impossible.

The Holocaust marks the culmination of modern anti-Semitism, the roots of which hark back to Jewish-Gentile relations in antiquity and to the Christian defamation and persecution of the Jews in the Middle Ages. Modern anti-Semitism transplanted the negative attitude of those ages into the context of modern secularized society.

In ancient times the Jewish community outside the homeland of Palestine was one which habitually separated itself from its social surroundings, wherever these happened to be. Exclusive religious concepts and commitments acted as a barrier between Jews and their polytheistic neighbors. The Jewish community paid for this exclusiveness by drawing upon itself misconceptions about its make-up and beliefs, and inevitably, hatred. When the polytheistic world itself became indebted to Jewish tradition, "accepting" it in a Christian reinterpretation that was in turn unacceptable to Jews, mutual exclusiveness and denial assumed a singular, historically almost unparalleled character. Christians tolerated the existence of a Jewish minority among them on condition that, politically and socially, it be kept on the level of a pariah group. Jews for their part submitted outwardly to Christian governance, maintaining at the same time a kind of mental reservation about its legitimacy, and awaiting its termination—at least so far as the Jewish sojourn in foreign lands was concerned.

Jews in Christian society were allowed a precarious existence, fulfilling an economic role that was sometimes not unimportant, but never highly regarded. They were at any rate never permitted to transcend the status of strangers, and whenever their service was deemed unnecessary, or utilitarian factors became outweighed by other, notably religious, considerations, they could be dispensed with, expelled, or physically destroyed. In his perennial role as outcast, the Jew came to be depict-

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ed as an almost inhuman being; by the end of the Middle Ages, the name, Jew, had diabolical associations in every European language.

The Jew's pariah status seemed to come to an end when, in the wake of 18th-century rationalism and Enlightenment, as well as the ensuing social and political changes in European society, Jews were extricated from their peculiar position and included in the new category of citizens. With the subversion of traditional concepts of Christianity in the Enlightenment, the theological prop of Jewish exclusion also seemed to be broken. In a secularized state and society, so the prognosis went, not only would barriers to the economic, social, and political integration of Jews be removed, but all vestiges of prejudice would also evaporate in the sunlight of reason.

This prognosis, though supported by logic, was only partially fulfilled. If the index of integration was the disappearance of peculiarly Jewish choices of profession, or patterns of family and communal life, or cultural traits, the prophets of total assimilation had reason to be disappointed. For the Jewish minority, even where it had been granted formal emancipation at one stroke, as in France and Holland, remained a clearly recognizable subgroup even after the lapse of three or four generations. It distinguished itself through concentration in certain fields of economic activity, through the tendency to endogamy, through communal solidarity, and of course through religious nonconformism. Jewish social existence, in other words, still presented a problem, possibly an even more perplexing one than heretofore, when accepted theological conceptions had sufficed to explain Jewish origin and character, had justified Jewish apartness and inferior social status, and had looked forward to an ultimate Jewish conversion to Christian truth. Once the elements of this old ideology were confuted by rationalism, a new theory was needed to account for Jewish peculiarity.

Such a theory was provided by rationalism itself, and was based on an ethnological conception of history spelled out most eloquently by Voltaire. According to this theory, the conduct and fate of tribes and nations could best be understood through a study of their literary and other cultural productions. Jewish religion, and especially its literary fountainhead, the Bible, remained the clue to understanding Jewish history, but not in the traditional way of seeing the Jews as the chosen people forsaken because of their religious failure, but rather as a documentation of Jewish character. Voltaire was convinced that, by exposing the immoral, indeed the barbaric, character of biblical figures, he had found the clue to the behavior of Jews in his own time and throughout the ages. In effect he simply took over from the Christian tradition its centuries-old stereotype of the Jew, finding an explanation for it that accorded with his own philosophic outlook.

Here we come to the crucial point of transition from Christian to post-Enlightenment anti-Semitism. Jews entered the modern world under the auspices of rationalism, a doctrine positing that neither national origin nor religious affiliation should bar the way of the individual in state and society. Jews were given a chance to rehabilitate themselves, to move away from their marginal position in society and thus dispel the prejudices that clung to their image and their very name. Such rehabilitation indeed took place more or less completely in some countries. In Holland, for instance, where, as elsewhere, Jewish emancipation was regarded apprehensively and strong arguments were marshaled against it, emancipation once achieved was scarcely ever questioned; Dutch Jews were able to find their place in the social structure while retaining a good deal of their ethnic and cultural make-up. In Britain, social barriers against Jews remained strong for a long time; still, their status as legitimate citizens became firmly established in time and negative reflections on Jewish status and character, though sometimes strongly voiced, never really gained ground. In France, Austria, and Hungary, and most conspicuously in Germany, on the other hand, initial misgivings on the subject of Jewish emancipation were never wholly silenced. From the very beginning, public opinion wavered between the utopian expectation of absolute assimilation through the effacement of Jewish characteristics, and a disbelief in Jewish willingness or ability to shed real or alleged character traits. The first generations of emancipated and half-emancipated Jews were exposed to permanent scrutiny to see whether they would live up to expectations or, on the contrary, end by confirming the skeptics in their conviction of the futility of this social experiment.

Among opponents of Jewish emancipation the anti-Jewish sallies of a Voltaire were only one of many varied ideological arguments to be drawn upon. Voltaire's anti-Jewish remarks were themselves a sequel or by-product of his anti-Christian campaign, yet in combination the two offered a prototype for a kind of pagan anti-Semitism that made Judaism responsible even for the evils caused by Christianity. At the other end of the scale was the combination of Jew-hatred with a revived interest in Christianity itself, the attempt to salvage Christianity from the historical and rationalistic critique of the Enlightenment. All such reconstructions of Christianity as a religious *Weltanschauung* or system of morality took Judaism as a foil to demonstrate the superiority of the religion that had supplanted it. Even where Christian dogmas and traditions were denied or ignored, the inferiority of Judaism was taken for granted, and this inferiority could then be ascribed by transference to those living individuals who were at-

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tached to Judaism if only through their racial origin. Diluted Christianity thus served as one of the most fertile grounds of anti-Semitic theories; as the historian Simon Bernfeld has observed, "Even those Christian scholars who maintain that Jesus never existed concur that the Jews crucified him."

The main arena for anti-Semitism of this kind was Protestant Germany, but it existed in Catholic countries as well. In France, the politician and journalist Edouard Drumont, the central figure of French anti-Semitism, embraced Catholicism not out of a conviction of its religious truth but rather because it was, he held, a central part of French mentality—a frame of mind to which he declared Jews incapable of conforming even if they were to convert. Thus were explicit notions of race smuggled into the discussion, giving ideological support to the assumption of a deficiency in the Jewish character that had long been implied in the theological traditions of Christianity and in popular European culture.

The main function of modern anti-Semitic theories was not to create new animosity against Jews but to impede the retreat of inherited emotions and prejudices. Yet preserved under the cover of modern ideologies, anti-Jewish bias and passions tended to become even more radical than in their original theological setting. Christian doctrine had prescribed a pariah status for the Jew but at the same time had justified and even underwritten his continued existence. Jews were spiritually contaminated but capable of regenerating themselves through conversion to Christianity. The supplanting of Christian teachings by rationalistic ideologies changed this whole perspective. Once the notion of spiritual contamination turned into a character defect, and the defect was held to be indelible, the presence of Jews in non-Jewish society could begin to appear intolerable. Indeed, the more consistent anti-Semites, like Gyozo Istóczy in Hungary, Edouard Drumont in France, and Eugen Duehring in Germany did not limit their recommendations to the restriction of Jewish rights, but spoke openly of expatriation and extermination.

Because of the similarity between the conclusions of these men and Nazi ideology they are often regarded as precursors of Nazism. The Nazis themselves acknowledged their indebtedness to anti-Semites of earlier generations, but the connection between the two phases of development is certainly not one of historical causation. In surveying the German past Nazi ideologues freely rejected trends at variance with their intentions and adopted others that seemed to fit them. For having supported the cause of Jewish emancipation, figures like Christian Wilhelm von Dohm, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Karl August von Hardenberg were decried as un-German; Luther, Fichte, Duehring, and others were hailed as the legitimate representatives of the German spirit. The fact that such a choice had to be made shows that, rather than the past's determining the present, it was the present that made its own connection with the past by adopting figures and trends with which it felt an affinity.

Of course, between the deeds of the Nazis and those figures accepted by them as their spiritual mentors, or designated by the historian as their precursors, there lies the hiatus of time. This is true not only of remote figures like Luther, but even of political anti-Semites of the late 19th century like Duehring, whose thinking may have had a demonstrable bearing on the emergence of Nazism. Duehring, to be sure, harbored an almost morbid hatred of Jews and anything reminiscent of Judaism, and was committed to the Darwinian concept of human history. But who could say in 1880 that fifty years hence, the ideas of this lonely philosopher would be adopted as a practical program by a political party, and that this party would acquire the apparatus of a mighty state to implement those ideas? Between Duehring and Hitler there is not only the gulf of a half-century of fateful history, but also the psychological difference between the man of thought, detached from the plane of action and giving free reign to his ideas and fantasies, and the man of uninhibited will who was prepared to act on those fantasies.

VII

THE PERPLEXING interdependence of past and future can perhaps be illuminated by a mental experiment. Had France produced a French Hitler or Hungary a Hungarian one, Drumont or Istóczy might have easily assumed the role of Duehring, as precursor of catastrophe. There is nothing frivolous in imagining such a contingency. France and Hungary each had its own anti-Semitic tradition, which *could* have emerged in radicalized fashion, and though these countries did not in fact produce a Hitler, when Nazi Germany gained control of them in the war the presence of local anti-Semitism insured acquiescence, sometimes enthusiastic, in the Hitlerite program. But let us carry the mental experiment a step further. Is a Dutch Hitler imaginable? The notion seems absurd. Such a man would have had to create, *ex nihilo*, an anti-Semitic ideology and anti-Jewish impulses in the Dutch populace; the absence of these elements is documented not only in the history of Jewish-Gentile relations in Holland in the 19th century, but also in Dutch behavior toward Jews and Germans during the Nazi occupation.

Imagining fictitious events is a legitimate methodological tool for setting reality in perspective. History, however, consists of hard facts, things that occurred and, once having occurred, became irreversible. You may be convinced that a Hitler could have arisen in France or Hungary, or for that matter that his rise could have been pre-

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vented in Germany. What might have happened does not belong to history, what happened does. The Hitler period is indelibly marked in the recorded history of all the European nations, first and foremost in the history of the German people; on an altogether different plane it has also become a part of Jewish history, never to be deleted or forgotten. It is the allotted task of historians to record these events as completely as they can. They must do so not in order to be able to predict the future, but to derive from a knowledge of the past a proper diagnosis of the present.

We may define Jewry as it left the ghetto as a community in need of rehabilitation—the objective of emancipation in its broad historical meaning. Anti-Semitism, on the other hand, represented a tremendous effort to impede this process of rehabilitation. The counterblast of anti-Semitism having reached a frightful climax in the Holocaust, the question to be asked concerns the direction in which we are moving at the present time. For rehabilitation has also in the meantime taken a momentous step forward, through the act of Jewish auto-emancipation, the establishment of a Jewish state. The connection between the Holocaust, with all that it signified, and the establishment of Israel and the readiness of the majority of the Jewish people to protect it, is more than obvious. But what about the resistance to Jewish rehabilitation? Did it spend its vigor in the frightful act of the Holocaust, or is it only in a state of dormancy, ready to awaken on some future occasion?

To put the question differently, is there a lasting effect to the Holocaust? Does it operate as a permanent cathartic agent, paving the way to a final reconciliation between Judaism and its adversaries, or does it serve as a paradigm, proving that the Jew as Jew, either as an individual or as a collective, has a lower claim to existence and dignity than any other human group on earth? Indications of both tendencies could be pointed to in the history of the post-Holocaust decades. Which tendency will prevail in the long run is the fateful question hovering over our generation. The doubt implied in the question arises out of the context of past events. The answer to it is hidden in the womb of time.

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Tom Wicker's Attica

Michael Novak

It is not widely recognized that there is more than one kind of racial attitude among whites in America. Some whites have since birth had extensive dealings with blacks, in a wide variety of situations. Some have come to these dealings without any personal, familial, or cultural involvement in the institution of slavery. Some, like the French and the Hispanics, have come from cultures in which intermarriage between races is a fairly common circumstance. But if in the pluralism of white cultures there are demonstrably different historical experiences with black cultures, our social analysts have not sufficiently noticed the extent to which the interpretation of the meaning of race in America has become "Southernized." Not only do many of the most eminent blacks who have codified white-black relations derive from Southern culture—leaders as diverse as Martin Luther King, Jesse Jackson, and Vernon Jordan; many of our most outspoken white liberals, too, those who are, as it were, almost fixated on this issue, have been Southerners: men like Lyndon Johnson, Bill Moyers, Garry Wills, Larry King, Willie Morris, Ramsey Clark, and Tom Wicker.

American culture is too often examined from the perspective of Massachusetts southward and westward, and so to some extent the voices of Southerners contribute an important counterpoint in the national self-understanding. Yet on matters of race—and on moral questions, more generally—Southern perceptions of urban industrial society tend to distort reality in important ways.

It is characteristic of Southern liberals that they have come late to liberal attitudes on race; usually, they can date to the day and hour the time they first touched a black, embraced a black, or for the first time addressed a black as an individual like themselves. It is also characteristic that they approach the racial question in preeminently evangelical and moralistic terms. Finally, it is characteristic that, sensitive to the moral burden carried by every Southerner in entering the world of Northern white liberals, such Southerners almost unconsciously compensate by trying to give frequent evidences of their morality. The dominant symbols of morality in America are men of sterling character and impeccable family reputations—the "Massachusetts men" Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., speaks so fondly of—the members of "blue-ribbon" panels, the Yankee brahmins. A Southerner like Lyndon Johnson, or even Terry Sanford, or Jimmy Carter, or J. William Fulbright, or Sam Ervin, is necessarily insecure in his moral standing on the national stage. Being Southern is almost like bearing an Italian name: watchfulness is stimulated among the guardians of the narrow gates; one can feel their skepticism.

And for a Southerner who would aspire to true national eminence there is a further obstacle to clear: in learning the ways of the Northern middle class, the liberal professionals, one must also avoid too fawning an approval of "middle-class procedures," "middle-class mores," and "middle-class values." One must imitate the ways but learn to disdain the household gods; irreverence and skepticism are necessary proofs that one has caught the hang of it.

The way is made a little easier because the complexity and ambiguity of Northern industrial life have deprived even the guardians of our national moral symbols of their certainty as to what is right or wrong. The infusion of the fresh faith of converts is a Northern necessity, the justification for all those missionary forays down the years. And so they come: proper, neat, clean, highly purposive and moral young men to teach their jaded teachers the true faith again. Bill Moyers is the very voice of reason and virtue, Ramsey Clark the apostle, Tom Wicker the avenging scribe.

Their way has been especially smooth since the Kennedy era, and most of them, indeed, owe their national emergence to the Kennedy period. For that was the era when Lindisfarne and Camelot—the Celtic fires—replaced the mellower English abbeys as the sources of the nation's moral rhetoric. "Superman Comes to the Supermarket," Norman Mailer once perceived: the sudden wedding of arriviste professionals and moral fervor, when politics was seized from the hands of "mere politicos" and offered to the ambitions of the young, the tough, the willing, the new frontiersmen, the new generation come of age. As pragmatism, and wheeling-dealing, and new bureaucracies, and new techniques began to lose their moral luster, many "Kennedy liberals" moved rhetorically leftward: i.e., they escalated their moral fervor (which was the very reason for their entrance into public life, along with their ambition to be

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famous men) exactly in proportion as the programs they championed met the ironies and tragedies inherent in every form of politics. They espoused withdrawal, not so much from Vietnam as from "centrist" politics, from liberalism, from a sense of ambiguity and that humane cynicism that must line the stomach of every successful political practitioner, and they began to flirt with "raised consciousness," "radicalization," and "revolution." They did not *become* revolutionaries—or few did—but they denounced the "tough pragmatism" that was the backbone of the New Frontier, and in its place they embraced its high moral rhetoric, which for John Kennedy, at least, was only its outward magic: the poetry that gilds Irish crassness, the wit, the way with words, the famous blarney. They kept the blarney and abandoned the hardball. And, slowly, the Irish New Frontier gave way to political evangelism, the urban Irish toughness to Southern morality.

In their present state, the intellectual and moral underpinnings of what used to be the Northern Left have the consistency of hominy. Description, diagnosis, and analysis have been replaced by moral mush; outrage and sermonettes, doomsaying and paradisiacal vistas, have replaced pragmatic modesty. We are promised all—or nothing. "Middle" is a term of opprobrium. As one might imagine, in the background falls the splash of blood. For what the rhetorical revolutionaries cannot bring themselves to do, some who honor them do not hesitate to do.

THE reception of Tom Wicker's odd account of Attica* demonstrates conclusively the lust of Northern liberals to drink the Southern cup, to charge again their anger, outrage, and moral passion. The explicit confessions of the text and the experience of renewed commitment expressed by the book's reviewers tell us more than we need to know about the intellectual and moral state of mind of those of whom we used to hope so much: the readers of books, the literate and enlightened Left.

Wicker writes of himself, everybody knows by now, in an unnecessary third person. In Norman Mailer's hands, the device allows for multiple personas, ironic distance, a self-mocking and psychoanalytic point of view. In Wicker, it is merely theatrical: Wicker himself as the subject of a novel. The aim may be modesty, the avoidance of the "I"; the net effect is that of television journalism: Wicker's story towers over Attica's as on television Roger Mudd is larger than the capitol.

The structure of *A Time to Die* is rather tightly chronological, although a reflective and personal dimension is added through flashbacks to Wicker's past, occasional disquisitions on prisons in the United States, and sundry philosophical views. The prose, meant to suggest Melville or Faulkner, actually suggests James Jones and the genre of the tough guy with the heart of gold.

On Friday, September 10, 1971, the book begins, Tom Wicker sat "in the executive dining room of the Geographic" with celebrities and men of power, whose names are listed for a full paragraph, enjoying "the best talk in Washington." Wicker "had a vivid sense of having come a long, long way" from his home town of Hamlet, North Carolina. There is a phone call, inviting him to Attica. He did not even know a riot had begun the day before; he hadn't paid attention to the story in the *Times*.

Former Nieman fellow, confidant of President Kennedy, former Washington bureau chief of the New York *Times*, and now a thrice-weekly columnist and associate editor of the *Times*, Wicker is as the call arrives one of a dozen most influential figures in one of the most powerful industries in America, the merchants of communications. As a highly paid journalist and as twice now a writer of best-sellers, he is richer, better known, and of greater political potency than most senators and governors. This is the person chosen as one of the twenty-seven "neutral observers" who were permitted by New York State at the scene of the Attica riot, fourteen of them, including Wicker, invited specifically by the rioting inmates.

The most important information in Wicker's book is about Wicker himself. On what he says about Attica at least three preliminary points must be made. First, Wicker never gives us fair criteria by which we might measure "conditions" (the inmates' code word) at Attica. The only prison of which Wicker offers us a first-person account is Attica. Some of the features that appall him are common to all those institutions that Erving Goffman calls "total institutions"—asylums, hospitals, prep schools, convents, monasteries—and some are common to crowded, lower-class urban areas. We do not learn from Wicker that the average term of incarceration at Attica is only seven years, nor that it is one of the most modern prisons in the U.S.; only in the pictures and diagrams do we discover how large, ample, and generous with space it is.

Wicker is shocked that inmates receive only 50 cents a day for their work, without adding in the $10,000 per prisoner it costs the state to keep a roof over their heads, feed them, keep them warm, and maintain their health. He does not note that the prisoners' only complaint about their food is that they receive "too much pork" (a legitimate sore point to the Black Muslims); he does not note that every day after lunch the inmates are handed an apple and cookies for an afternoon snack. (One demand of the rioters was "for fresh fruit daily.") Wicker is not amazed, as the reader is, to find that each cell comes equipped with earphones, so that each inmate can listen to the radio and records without disturbing others. He is outraged that each cell is closed, so that prisoners cannot look down the corridor without mirrors; he is not surprised, as the reader is, that hand mirrors are permitted,

* *A Time to Die*, Quadrangle, 342 pp., $10.00.

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and not gratified that the prisoners are not permanently locked in tiers of open cages instead of private rooms. The grievances of the prisoners are shockingly trivial, and remind one far more of Auberon Waugh's complaints about boarding schools in England than the prison in Arkansas where so many grisly corpses were found or conditions in the mines and mills of Pennsylvania *circa* 1920. Wicker shows not a speck of a tough reporter's cynicism about the complaints of inmates. He calls their neat cells, their daily life, "the lowest condition of existence." Yet lack of personal liberty apart, the prisoners at Attica live better than a majority of people on this planet, not to mention most prisoners in history.

Secondly, Wicker's reporting gives us no clear sense of why the riot started. The prisoners were restive, he suggests, because they were the victims of injustice. Yet no one complained of having been improperly tried, sentenced, or jailed; nor even of illegal loss of life, injury, or brutal treatment. Indeed, compared to the brutality of homosexual rape, vendetta, debt "enforcement," and other violence among the inmates themselves, the incidents Wicker reports of "police brutality" seem well within the range of the expectable amount of intimidation the vastly outnumbered guards would have to insist upon in order to survive. No one complained of being *shot* by a guard. Wicker quotes the leader of the riot: "In all the years I've been in prison . . . I'd never seen guns in the yard. I'd never seen a gun fired from the tower. . . . You never think of the guns as a thing that of itself could cause harm." Prison society is not pleasant, and it can be improved, as no one more than the liberal Russell Oswald, the New York State Commissioner of Corrections, was working to accomplish. But having observed British police in Hong Kong, Italian police in Rome, and French police in Paris, knowing a little of police operations in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Vietnam, I found the behavior of the guards at Attica even as described by Wicker rather high on the scale of humane conduct in their circumstances.

The prisoners shouted later that they wanted to be treated "AS MEN," in an appropriately upper-case voice. But it was precisely because they had failed to act accordingly that they found themselves in Attica. They had shown by their proven crimes that they did not deserve the society of men. They were being treated as prisoners, at heavy expense to taxpayers, because they could no longer be trusted with adult male responsibilities. Wicker writes as if their rhetoric of oppression were legitimate; as if rates of recidivism were a failure of the state rather than of individuals themselves—as if the state could do what God himself did not do: make all men good.

ROGER STARR has pointed out (COMMENTARY, March 1973) that the McKay Commission, appointed by the state to investigate Attica, "found no evidence" that the riot had been planned, but that it didn't *look* very hard for evidence. Well, why did it start? My own theory is gleaned indirectly from Wicker (and similar accounts). A concerted effort was going on in the prisons to fill the heads of not terribly bright, uneducated, and uncritical minds with revolutionary illusions. Talking revolution in the ghettos was not very rewarding; people were too smart and even on the meanest streets too many had it better than they ever had, in the South, or in Latin America, or wherever. Thousands were going to colleges, "getting out" and "moving up." In prison, the imagery at least had objective correlatives; inmates, by their own deeds, had indeed condemned themselves to a "police state," even if not the most terror-ridden in the world. Wicker quotes a letter from Sam Melville, the white ex-con "radical" bomber and bank robber, written a month before the riot: "I can't tell you what a change has come over t[he] brothers in Attica. So much more awareness and growing consciousness of themselves as potential revolutionaries, reading, questioning, rapping all the time." Most of the inmates were young; Champen, almost forty, was respected for his maturity. Herb Blyden, another leader, told the inmates in a D-yard speech: "They had never had a chance to rise in a racist and oppressive America . . . prison being no more than the actual representation of the life they were forced to lead even on the outside. . . . And we are the vanguard!" The inmates felt "liberated" by the mere capture of D-yard. It was a species of role-playing, a psychodrama, not meant to be taken seriously—surely, not meant to provoke counter-attack. No one boasted of being internally liberated, never again to commit crime; nor of having any revolutionary plan to help America or the rest of the "oppressed" world. They felt better in the sunlight and air of the familiar yard, with hostages. Revolution? Self-dramatization.

Finally, Wicker is ambivalently "charitable" toward Governor Rockefeller's refusal to go to Attica in person. In his long telephone conversation with the Governor, Wicker does not make, as he himself is obliged to recognize, a convincing case; the Governor has sound reasons which Wicker cannot meet. So Wicker then proceeds to whine and undercut by rhetoric what he could not meet with reason. The Governor, Wicker goes on in classical Southern rhetoric, ending every sentence with this phrase, prefers "the order of things." But Wicker himself in his newspaper columns is, when it suits him, America's leading champion of moral and constitutional "order." Order is not a "middle-class" concept but a condition absolutely essential to a government of laws; order is essential to the Bill of Rights, the Constitution, and democratic procedures. Unless human beings have internalized order, guards must be posted everywhere and everyone must be watched. Without order, neither democracy nor industry nor

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daily acts of trust are possible. Proper order is the basis for outrage over Watergate, for concern about CIA domestic surveillance, for worry over the rash of bombings, kidnappings, and taking of hostages on airlines and elsewhere. Without order, life is searches, force, a police state. Wicker doesn't have the courage to argue against Governor Rockefeller, or the intelligence to see precisely where the Governor's failure lay.

Rockefeller should *not* have talked to the inmates, as Wicker wanted, for the reasons the Governor gave: no deals with kidnappers and hostage-holders, no conferring of credibility on confused and illusory revolutionary theater. But Rockefeller should not have used surrogates to do the dirtiest work of the state. Rockefeller's habitual style is to do his deeds through hired agents. In a private citizen, the style is contemptible enough; in an executive officer, it is inexcusable. The broken figure of Commissioner Oswald is proof enough that the Governor burned up his subordinates to save himself. The fact that no one on the scene thought to have medical units ready to enter the prison yard after the troopers' assault indicates that the Governor could have played an important role as overall administrator of the restoration of order. If Rockefeller had been there, the citizens of New York would not have felt leaderless or suffered from his cowardice. Attica was about responsibility; the Governor failed his.

On Attica, then, Wicker sheds little useful light. The true story of *A Time to Die* is the story of Tom Wicker's testing as a man. There is no mistaking this as the dramatic center of the book. Wicker sees himself leaving for Attica already on page 6 as having an opportunity that "might make him think better of his work, even of his life," and as he leaves, his important lunch companions are "moving to and fro, talking no doubt of Michelangelo." Later, he recalls: "It had occurred to him within minutes of entering the prison . . . that perhaps the time had arrived for his life to be put to the challenge." Before Attica, "his fiction seemed no more promising than it had been a decade earlier. Nor did he think his newspaper work had had enough value to sustain his passionate desire to signify as a writer. His personal life was breaking up and falling away. . . . [R]eflecting on Attica, he discovered that he had arrived at an age and time —his divorce, the shattering of the stability he had come to depend on, was a large part of it— when neither his profession nor his sense of self yielded him an essential feeling of worth. He liked and believed in his work; but its aloof, critical onlookers' ethic, valid professionally, could not sustain his life." Exhausted later, "he realized how tired he was, how old, how inadequate, how disappointed in himself." Later, in action: "He was caught up in the euphoria of decision, leadership, action. He felt bigger, stronger, better than he ever had. He thought he could handle anything, and he was prepared to try. He felt true to himself." Attica was therapy, Attica was a time of testing, Attica was real life.

By his own account, Wicker failed the challenge of Attica. His role, as one of the observers, was to see to it that "*Nobody gets killed.*" But in the event—although he is still less than willing to face this squarely—what he and his fellow observers did was help to bring the massacre about. Instead of telling the inmates the truth about the troops outside, or challenging their illusions about what the state was prepared to do, or trying to persuade them to put their demands on a realistic basis which might have led to a peaceful settlement, Wicker and the other observers chose *not* to make recommendations, but rather to serve as conduits of the rioters' story to the outside world. When Commissioner Oswald says plaintively, "A committee as powerful as this ought to have been able to swing that group around to meeting with me on neutral grounds," he summarizes the observers' achievements fairly. The observers had been loath to swing the inmates on anything, had acted like non-directive therapists awaiting insight. What came instead was bloodshed.

The name of Wicker's hometown in North Carolina is Hamlet, and it is in the role of Hamlet that the reader sees his efforts to avert that bloodshed defeated, not by the cosmos, but by his own moral and intellectual flaws. Since these flaws are common to many "decent, liberal, progressive" persons in our midst, Wicker's greatest service is to have exhibited them—even if without full awareness of what he has done—for public judgment.

The most immediately striking of these flaws is the desire to have everything both ways. On the one hand Wicker represents himself as a naive person, a "middle-class product of a system he regarded as fundamentally rational." In this character he can express anger and outrage at every indication that society is not "fundamentally rational." On the other hand, he is a realist, too tough-minded to be a revolutionary, to believe in dramatic change; and whenever it suits his convenience, especially his professional convenience as a journalist, he can slip into this character too. Wicker doesn't *really* believe in reason and order; yes, he does. "Wicker, at one level, agreed with the skeptics. . . . On a more intellectual plane, however, Wicker found himself, as have so many liberals and intellectuals in times of challenge to liberalism and reason, unable to concede the futility of sensible conciliation of interests." He gives many little sermons on the inevitable corruption in human nature: "Well, there'll always be an Attica." Wicker "believed human nature would prevail over any system, that justice would flag and power assert itself in any company of men; and that in all societies, the fight for justice and a limit to power would go on, indomitably, inevitably, the cycle dominating the generations,

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the struggle never ceasing, the victory never won."

Is the cosmos indifferent, as indifferent as the silent Potomac that one day, fifteen years earlier, swept Wicker helplessly along and threw him over a 76-foot falls? Death and life seemed equally significant, then. Or does the cosmos favor progress through struggle? "He wanted to help men and things be better, for once, than they might have been. If he did not really believe that likely, he nevertheless hoped it could happen." Philosophically, Wicker has not decided if he is an existentialist, a progressive pragmatist, a stoic, a Scotch Calvinist. It's all mixed up. He pulls out whichever strand is rhetorically needed for his posture of the moment.

SECONDLY, Wicker's perspective on America is innocent of history: "Orangeburg, the cities' riots, the Tet offensive, the Chicago convention, My Lai, Cambodia, Kent State, Jackson State—these and other shocks to his conventional understanding of things had carried Tom Wicker, by September 1971, a long way from the comfortable place in the mainstream of action and acceptance that he once had relished. He had suffered professional and social opprobrium for his developing view of a society gone seriously astray from proclaimed ideals; his 'constituency' was made up substantially of alienated and protesting blacks, young people, the disadvantaged." One marvels before anything else at the stance taken in this passage, in which one of America's most successful and influential journalists manages to turn himself into a lone prophet crying in the wilderness. (Is the "constituency" he refers to intended to describe readers of the *Times*?) More important, Wicker either displays ignorance of or vastly underestimates the bloodshed, violence, and continuing degradation experienced by the white immigrants who settled in the urban industrial centers—and even in rural towns like Batavia and Warsaw and, yes, Attica—and hence he sentimentalizes the sufferings of blacks. He forgets the bloodshed required to end child labor, to make labor organizing legal, to permit strikes, and to make strikes effective. He forgets the hundreds of thousands who perished in the mines or who were burned to ashes in the mills or mangled by machinery.

For example, exactly seventy-four years before Attica, on September 10, 1897, a sheriff's posse of seventy men armed with rifles fired on an unarmed group of "Hungarian" strikers at Lattimer, Pennsylvania, killing twenty-eight and wounding at least forty (many were dragged off by relatives and never became part of the official count). The New York *Times*, informed later that the shooting had not been provoked, editorialized on September 19, 1897: "Now this is merely incredible. . . . America's sheriff's posses do not behave in that way." George McGovern's doctoral thesis recounts the Rockefeller massacres of immigrant miners in Colorado in 1914. Eric Sevareid's autobiography tells of a massacre of strikers in St. Paul, Minnesota, when he was a reporter for the University of Minnesota *Daily*. In 1936, mounted troops bloodied heads and hired thugs tarred and feathered union organizers in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Nor does all this show anything especially evil about America; the fate of peasants and serfs in Europe at the time of immigration was even worse.

Thirdly, Wicker has an easy solution to complicated moral problems: the exploited, especially if they are black, are always right. He attributes his virtue to the "class sense he had absorbed from his father, the obligation to side with the underdog, the downtrodden, the poor, and the exploited." Given Wicker's own stated "constituency," his source of power and his moral imperative coincide, which is convenient. But what if the "poor and the exploited" at Attica were in the wrong? Could it have happened that way? What would the inmates have had to do to be wrong? "Honor and heritage required of him that he stand for the underdog, that the place of man was with the workers and the poor against the powerful and the greedy." But some workers see him, precisely, as one of the "powerful" and the "greedy." Coming out of prison the first day, "Wicker suddenly realized he had thought nothing at all about the hostages." He never visits correction officers or their families. The truly invisible people in his book, outside Wicker's vision, and deeply betrayed by him, are the working-class whites of the prison staff. They figure in his book exactly as he describes blacks in Hamlet during his youth: all he hears is their footsteps; all he vaguely feels is their presence.

WICKER is profoundly ambivalent about his own Southern heritage and about the liberalism for which he has exchanged it. Like many Southerners, he openly believes Southern liberals are better than Northern liberals—see to the heart of things quicker. Yet it is required that he disown the South. So on a troop train for ten days in 1946 with twenty-seven blacks and two other whites, "he set the face of his life away from the South." A convert to Northern liberalism, he keeps trying to prove himself worthy. He "envies" those, like William Kunstler, the radical attorney (a fellow observer at Attica), who are more to the Left than he. Above all, he admires men who have "paid the price," who have "earned their right" to liberalism; he always feels unworthy.

Wicker's most profound ambivalence, of course, concerns race. The first time he ever shook hands with a black was at the age of nineteen, at the university; his first human exchange with a black appears to have been on that troop train—a highly charged moment to him, a moment in which the direction of his life changed. "In 1946, he had made the great discovery that blacks were as human and individual as anyone. It was not

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much to learn, yet it was more than some people learn in a lifetime." It is difficult for those of us brought up in Northeastern industrial cities to believe Wicker can be serious. Our earliest fistfights were with blacks; we played ball with and against each other. We are not without our own forms of racism, but we have long since done blacks the honor of liking or disliking what we see in them, whether one by one or in solidarity. And we have tried to resist attributing all problems, including all the problems of the blacks themselves, to race alone.

Not so Wicker. "Racism, its consequences, the modern attack on it both legal and intellectual, and its endurance in so many forms had been the central public concern of Tom Wicker's life—and one that, in his life's pattern, had set him apart from many of his contemporaries and his peers." And again: "There had been no moment in his adult, professional life when 'the race question' had not been prominent in his mind and work. Its effect upon him and what he had written, he supposed, was responsible for his presence at Attica."

Thus on page after page, Wicker reduces the issues of Attica to race, to "whiteness," to "blackness." He seems to think of the Latino prisoners as black, and he slides over the whites among the inmates as a kind of embarrassment to the thesis he really wants to sell. "At the heart of the matter was the fear of blackness." Governor Rockefeller "did not appear to realize, even months later, the implications of two cardinal facts—that the attack force was all white and that the rebelling inmates were heavily black and Puerto Rican." But what *are* these implications? Europeans are not notoriously gentle to other Europeans. Officials have seized farmhouses at point of gun from penniless white farmers. Massacres have happened in every decade in American history, and as likely as not whites were the victims of whites. Only 54 per cent of the inmates at Attica were black (9 per cent were Latino), figures not inconsistent with crime rates among young males in New York State, particularly among the amateurs most likely to be caught.

To imagine every misunderstanding, hardship, injustice, and even brutality done to a black as prompted solely or chiefly by his race is a wretched disservice both to truth and to those who suffer. It is another form of putting them in their place. When in the intense emotion of parting from the inmates, Wicker was called "brother" by a black, and hugged him, "for the first time in his life he sensed that nothing racial stood between him and a human being who happened to be black. He felt himself free, for once . . . *free at last free at last. . . .*" Wicker's mystique of blackness and whiteness may possibly be Scotch-Irish and it is certainly Southern; it is not part of every white culture, and the emotion he describes here does not seem as attractive as he may imagine.

Even the most destructive form of Wicker's racism seems at first glance like exquisite sympathy. After a former prisoner, "G.I." Paris, spoke of "the conditions" in the prison and asked "You unnerstan'?," Wicker writes: "But how could the gap between 'the conditions' of G.I.'s life and his own—let alone those of the truly affluent—be really understood if it had not been lived? How could *he* fully know what 'the conditions' did. . . ? . . . He sensed the profound inadequacy of his understanding. . . ." How can this be? Wicker is not hesitant about understanding poor whites, or Vietnamese, or characters in fiction or in history books. Only when it comes to blacks and Latinos do his powers of understanding fail. But it is not necessary to *live* someone else's life in order to understand "the conditions" under which that life is lived. "Gaps" among humans can be crossed by understanding—indeed, with a little healthy cynicism, one can sometimes see others more clearly than they see themselves. It is condescending not to face others with the normal amount of cynicism.

Such cynicism deserts Wicker when it comes to blacks, but not as he deals with whites, especially when he believes them gullible or susceptible of emotional blackmail. Wicker's public detestation of threats of a "bloodbath" in Vietnam are well-known; one expects the "bloodbath" newspaper column yearly. Yet through four days of negotiation at Attica, Wicker and the other observers invoke the image of a "bloodbath" repeatedly in order to shock the Governor and state officials. They do not warn the inmates of a bloodbath, however; they protect the inmates' naiveté.

For 300 pages, Wicker tells us the inmates had no trust in the state; in the end he tells us they never wavered in their trust in the state, never imagined the troopers would come in shooting. And why should they? In earlier uprisings at Rochester and at Auburn the state sent troopers in with sticks rather than with guns. One might even argue that at Attica, too, instead of feeding the prisoners and allowing them to organize and to play at revolutionary theater, the state should immediately have sent in a large force without guns and taken back the prison, if not bloodlessly, at least with fewer dead. Why, then, did Wicker and the other observers—who knew that the state was serious—confirm the inmates in the illusions of revolutionary theater?

UNDERLYING everything, more important to his tale than abstract discussion, is this failure to tell the inmates the truth. On Sunday, September 12, Wicker realizes that no one has told the inmates about the guns outside, about the pressures for attack; no one has warned them that the state is serious. "If," he says to himself, "the faintest possibility existed that a blunt speech of warning might avoid calamity, he ought to take the microphone and state the truth as plainly as he could." Ashamed of his vulnerability as a Southerner, Wicker rationalizes.

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Time slips. "But the straw lay there to be grasped at . . . Wicker saw it clearly. He did not doubt the imperative to speak that had been placed upon him by the realization. . . . He knew what was expected of him, what he expected of himself. The moments passed. More hostages came forward. But he did not speak." These lines come at the end of a chapter. Even here, Wicker cannot bear to face his failure. He closes the quoted sentence with a qualifier: ". . . it seems." No seeming about it. He did not speak.

Later, he comes back to it:

> Obviously, a clear understanding of the real alternatives facing them might have made a great difference in D-yard that Sunday afternoon. "Why didn't someone say, 'Listen . . . their position is that they will not move another inch and they're going to come in with guns and shoot you people to death'?" Three years later, Roger Champen [an inmate leader] still was asking himself that question, and Tom Wicker could give no better answer than "you should have known." He knew that was hardly an answer at all.

And, still later, Wicker cannot accept the reassurance of his fellow observer, Congressman Herman Badillo: "We did all we could." "Wicker was not sure about that. He had not spoken in D-yard the afternoon before. But that was his to live with, not Badillo's."

Great moral failures do not happen suddenly; a thousand small surrenders prepare the way. In Wicker's case it was a long series of surrenders to rhetoric—revolutionary rhetoric and black rhetoric—that deprived him first of the ability to see the saving truth clearly and then the courage to speak it when lives were hanging in the balance.

EARLIER, on first hearing the inmates' rhetoric, Wicker is fascinated as "a Southerner who responded to eloquence." When Herb Blyden assures his "rapt audience" that the prison is "no more than the actual presentation of the life they were forced to live on the outside," Wicker congratulates him warmly afterward, and writes: "He was a man who spoke with the cutting edge of an essential truth that his hearers knew from their lives to be a truth." Clarence Jones later tells Wicker "how much an institution like this is a microcosm of the outside society. . . . Malcolm X used to tell blacks they were all in prison—that America meant prison for blacks." Wicker in "his evasive Southern way" concedes the point of Clarence Jones and Malcolm X "without anything to do or say that would change or answer it." Instead of conceding, he might have asked Jones, the publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, if he were being rhetorical, self-pitying, or merely manipulative of a poor Southern boy.

The inmates continually boasted of their readiness to die, and "Wicker, at least, had taken it almost literally." Later, however, Champen "explained that the speeches were really dramatizing how bad conditions are." It turned out that 46.8 per cent of the inmates did not expect guns to be used. But Wicker accepted black rhetoric at face value: "The pig only answered to the knife; The Man only yielded to the gun. That was what the brothers believed, what life had taught most of them." Yet in the final test, despite the predictions that hundreds and possibly thousands would be killed, 43 died, counting the guard and two prisoners killed earlier by the inmates. A horrible waste, but nothing approaching the picture drawn by the inmates and spread by the observers. On the one side, of the 211 troopers who stormed D-yard, only 74 men actually fired; and on the other side, the inmates did not kill the hostages when D-yard was attacked. (This does not seem as hard to understand as Wicker makes out. About to be overwhelmed, suddenly choking with tear gas, those who held the hostages had a chance of surviving only if they did not murder; murder when immediate retribution is on its way is not impossible to deter.)

Wicker's attitude toward the leaders at Attica was as uncritical as his attitude toward their rhetoric. He did not know that two prisoners had been executed in some orderly fashion, and that the leaders had more reasons than he suspected for resisting any demand short of amnesty. The leaders played on the crowd like fundamentalist preachers, and the crowd passively responded. Wicker does not explore the dark side of the leaders' personalities; he does not seek out their moral or emotional weaknesses; he accepts them, not quite at face value, but as symbols of revolution, as metaphors for materials locked up in his own psyche. He rails several times at "normal citizens" who saw in these inmates only "murderers, thieves, and rapists," and not their decency and their impressive talents. But here Wicker has things exactly backward. It is he who trivializes the inmates by taking their illusions seriously, by being amazed at their talents, and by averting his eyes from their pathologies, their ignorance, and their flirtations with destruction.

Every human being has enormous capacity for evil and also for good: Wicker included. Cleaving to the "moral rigor" his mother expected him to live up to, Wicker does not imagine that people like his mother—the mothers in Batavia, ordinary citizens—might be subtler than he. Of the troops at the prison he says, trying to be "charitable," that they were "unschooled in the subtleties of the situation." One wonders. Had they not understood the situation exactly, from the first? Did they not know that the sooner the assault was launched, the less bloodshed there was likely to be? Had they not done this before? Had they not already surmised full well that no "revolution" was beginning in Attica, and that meaner motives lay behind the posturing? Were they not thinking that, if further Atticas arose, they might be the next hostages? For all his "subtlety," Wicker by

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his own testimony was wrong at every step of the unfolding drama.

Indeed, it seems amazing that a professional journalist should have cared so little about, inquired so weakly into, the masses of people who are constantly at the edges of this text, almost never seen, but experienced as an ominous and hatéful presence: the new niggers of America. Wicker hugged black inmates in his farewell; he could not look the white hostages in the eye.

NOTHING could better symbolize the distortions which the Southern perspective has introduced into our understanding of race relations. The North is not the South, nor the South the North. Attica is not the Arkansas State Prison; Cicero, Illinois, is not Birmingham, Alabama; South Boston is not Little Rock. The North is a different, harsher world, and blacks who were churchgoing and gentle in the South are often gravely wounded by the amoral, hostile, and fiercely competitive working world of Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Toledo, and New York. The whites they meet are not from Southern culture, do not have Southern guilts. The rules are different. The game is different. Ideology abounds.

The inmates picked the wrong game at Attica, the game of revolution, and forty-three human beings lost their lives. It is not a game limited to blacks: this particular disease is free of racial bias. Southernized, however, revolution signifies "the blacks"; "oppressed" means black; "minority" means black; "poor" means black; "underdog" means black. All problems are defined as racial problems. But racial mysticism, applied to Northern neighborhoods and towns, will not alleviate the scarcity of jobs; the abuse of the civil right to life and limb by muggings, robbery, and rape; the downward slide of stable communities; the economic competition; the bias of the media in dividing black from white; the scramble for scholarships and decent schools. Racial illusions kill: that is the lesson of Attica, and of Tom Wicker's book.

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In Search of Moderate Egyptians

Joan Peters

THE recent breakdown of Secretary of State Kissinger's step-by-step negotiations in the Middle East was immediately followed by what seems to have been a carefully planned if private effort on the part of American officials to blame the failure of the mission on Israeli "intransigence" and lack of "flexibility." Implied in this view, which was attributed to both President Ford and Secretary Kissinger, and quickly made its way into newspapers and radio and television reporting, is the notion that on the Egyptian side, a new willingness has been shown to deal with Israel as an established fact and to take steps that might eventually lead to normal relations between the two countries—a process now allegedly jeopardized by Israel's "stubbornness." The Egyptians, in other words, according to this scenario, have changed; they no longer demand the destruction or disappearance of Israel; they have become moderate, while Israel has become inflexible and belligerent.

Even before the fighting ended in the 1973 war, reports had begun to circulate in the West about the new "reasonableness" in Egypt. Many Arabists argued that the restoration of Arab pride on the battlefield would permit Egypt to reach a peace with Israel. After the cease-fire, when Egyptians met Israelis for disengagement negotiations at Kilometer 101 in the Sinai, they did so in the presence of a Finnish UN observer force and to the acclamation of an army of nine hundred journalists. These hopeful beginnings were accompanied by a new kind of rhetoric emanating from Egyptian officialdom in which the old bellicosity and threats of throwing Israel into the sea were replaced by announcements of a readiness and a desire for peace.

For this change of rhetoric President Sadat was hailed by *Time* and *Newsweek* as "that most moderate of Arab leaders"; recently Egypt has been seen as synonymous with moderation. Editorials in the New York *Times* and other important newspapers around the country have seen "clear signs that Egypt . . . has already come around to accepting the desirability of coexistence with Israel." The *Times*'s Henry Tanner, just four months after the October war, reported with elation that he had seen a book on self-taught Hebrew in a Cairo display-window, an "illustration of the psychological and political transformation that Cairo has undergone since the war under Anwar el-Sadat's Presidency." Tanner in his reports from Cairo has consistently stressed what he sees as the "psychological trend in the Arab world toward accepting the existence of Israel." In a piece headed, "Why Egypt's No Threat Now," the syndicated columnist Rowland Evans spoke of Sadat's "no-war policy" and cited the example of Egypt's "vast investment" in the reconstruction of cities on the Suez Canal. Sadat, according to Evans, was "trying hard," as the lone voice of "moderation," to reach for a settlement with Israel. Thomas Ross of the Chicago *Sun-Times* Washington bureau reported that if Israel cooperated in the "delivery of the Sinai passes and oilfields," Sadat would "negotiate for a full peace . . . at Geneva." Jesse Zel Lurie wrote in the *New Leader* that he, as editor of *Hadassah* magazine, could talk politics openly with an Egyptian in the Cairo Hilton coffee shop: "Under Nasser, such a meeting would have been reported to Egyptian secret police." In the New York *Times Magazine,* Trudy Rubin indicated that, although some Egyptians could not be "friendly" with Israelis, at least not in this generation, the Egyptians she met "are tired of this war and willing to accept Israel's existence as the price for getting out of the quagmire and on with their living."

Recently I went to Cairo on journalistic assignment. Before setting out, I immersed myself in the literature attesting to the positive change in Egyptian attitudes toward Israel, including an essay in these pages by Nadav Safran, "Conversations in Cairo" (December 1974). To my amazement, once in Egypt I found virtually no evidence of such a change, although I interviewed as representative a cross-section of Egyptians as I could find—government officials, writers, academics, scientists, demographers, doctors, architects, engineers, housewives, shopkeepers, students, soldiers, salesmen, cab drivers, waiters, women's-rights activists, secretaries, carpenters, travel agents; Communists, leftists, nationalists, and right-wing conservatives. The consensus that emerged from these interviews, so far from conforming to the current Western perception of Egypt, seemed rather to suggest its opposite. Vehement anti-

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Israeli—and, what is more, anti-Jewish—sentiments continue to be the norm in Egypt, and are characteristic of government officials at the highest levels no less than of the man in the street.

* * * * *

I HAD applied for a visa at the Egyptian embassy in Washington, which entailed a short interview. "Which side are you on?" The side of peace, of course. Had I ever been to Israel? I had. Was the Byzantine coin I wore as a ring a religious symbol? No. The aide took my passport and a couple of articles I'd written on the Middle East conflict, and told me my visa would be ready the next morning. The passport was clean—I'd just had it renewed; he laughed as he leafed through it, commenting that many journalists seemed to feel the need of a passport without an Israeli visa in it. He insisted it made no difference, although I'd been told the contrary by at least half-a-dozen writers, some of whom had made unsuccessful attempts to get to Egypt with an Israeli-stamped passport. The next morning I got the visa and my articles were returned, with a word of welcome from the aide who said Egypt made no demand that I see things from her side, only that I be fair and balanced. The foreign ministry in Cairo had been called regarding my arrival, and would do everything possible to assist me.

Monday

THANKS to the friend of a friend, I had a room confirmed and waiting for me at the Cairo Hilton —which, I found upon arrival, I could have sold for four figures, so crowded was the hotel. Through mutual contacts I called Dr. Maksoud,* an engineer, and was graciously invited to lunch. Dr. Maksoud is engaged in the redevelopment of the port town of Ismailia. Over vermouth aperitif, spaghetti and filet mignon, and demitasse, the Maksoud family conversed about politics. Dr. Maksoud denounced Leninism as counter to the Muslim and Christian religions, and vigorously disavowed leftists of all sorts. Yet his daughter, Zenab, an architect, had spent four years in Cuba, "studying." Zenab and her fiancé, a physics professor at Cairo's American University, seemed indifferent to the discussion—they giggled a great deal—until suddenly Zenab began to speak fiercely about Israeli stubbornness. "They won't deal with the Arabs. Every initiative the Arabs have made has been refused by Israel." Her fiancé joined in, "They want more land—and more land. The Palestinians want their land back—they were expelled by Israel." Mrs. Maksoud began hesitantly, "The Jews were also expelled from Egypt in 1956 . . ." but her entire family broke in at once, "They left—they weren't expelled—50 to 60 per cent of Egypt's economy was in Jewish hands before '48—there was a Jew finance minister." Why should Jews have a separate state, they wanted to know. "We're not anti-Semitic, but why should not Israel accept to live together with Palestinians?" As for peace, they derided the idea that Sadat could come to terms with Israel. In fact, no President who made peace with Israel would "last a day," they explained.

Thursday

TAHSIN BASHEER, President Sadat's press spokesman, had agreed to squeeze in an interview. The French foreign minister would be arriving within the next few hours, the Shah of Iran was due soon, and the phones were ringing incessantly. But Basheer plunged doggedly if listlessly into a statement he'd no doubt repeated many times before. Suspicion in the "Arab mind" toward the Zionists had existed since the 1947 partition plan in the United Nations. The "Zionists wanted the partition as a first stage toward taking the whole country." The "Arab reaction was . . . not to divide the country. Even today this is the PLO solution, a secular country like America, where each man—irrespective of religion—can have the same rights." Basheer vigorously defended the PLO position, although he admitted after some urging that Yasir Arafat did mean to "replace Israel as it now exists." His conversation was peppered with slurs; he called the Israeli army "Hitlerian" and Prime Minister Rabin a terrorist.

Basheer supplied the phone numbers of some Egyptians he suggested I see during my stay. One was Chalad Mohadeen, formerly known as "the Red Major" for his early Communist activities (others in Cairo told me he is still a Communist). Mohadeen heads a movement called the "Egyptian Peace Committee," which is "fully supported" as a semi-official arm of the Egyptian government and holds frequent international conferences. The EPC is dedicated to the fight against "British, French, American . . . imperialism and colonialism." As a Marxist, Mohadeen says he fears "economic domination by the Israelis," but the real reason the Egyptian Peace Committee is "against the political foundation of Israel" is "racial difference"—namely, the fact that "Judaism is the official religion of the country." That Islam, as I pointed out, is constitutionally designated the official religion of Egypt and practically every other Arab state, he summarily dismissed: "So long as the 'Law of Return' . . . considers all Jews as world citizens in Israel," the Peace Committee will be against the Jewish state. "If any other Arab tells you that he is not against Israel, he is a liar," Mohadeen exclaimed.

Arafat, according to Mohadeen, is "a moderate man," and to the Arab world the Palestinians are "something great." "The United States, the Soviet Union, every country in the world is afraid of the movement." As for the Russians, "good relations

* All names used here are fictitious, except those of officials or public figures. Most interviews were recorded on tape.

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with the Soviet Union are one of the main political cards for all Arabs" and of paramount importance to "the policy of the peace movement." American "circles who benefit from the production of arms and from the cold war" are creating barriers to détente. American support of Soviet Jewish emigration naturally causes suspicion on the part of the Soviets; the U.S. has no right to interfere with the internal "sentiments" of the Soviet Union. Doesn't this run against the Arab objection to Israel's Law of Return, I asked? Mohadeen evaded the question, addressing himself instead to the issue of anti-Semitism. There was no anti-Jewish feeling in Egypt, he asserted, but because of the "situation in Israel," Egyptians no longer make a distinction between "the Jew, Israel, and Zionism."

Saturday

I BECAME acquainted with Ismail, a brigadier general who had accompanied General Gamassy to Kilometer 101 for the signing of the cease-fire accords with Israel's General Yariv, whom he knew well. We met at the home of Jean, an American friend of mine now living in Egypt. At our first meeting Ismail declared that he felt like an Israeli, he knew so many of them from Kilometer 101. He loved Israel, and declared, "I know my people—no talk about war—we want to deal with Israel. We have other problems: illiteracy, development." Here at last was the moderation I had heard so much about in the United States.

In subsequent meetings, however, Ismail's warm feeling for Israel cooled noticeably. His description of the Israeli military grew less amicable. General Yariv's "Britishness," General Bar-Lev's "Russianness," a joke when he first reminisced about them, later came to seem offensive to Ismail. He explained that "Egypt couldn't accept European Jews—so harsh. In another generation Sadat says he will make peace. Sabras are different, softer . . . more Arab. After all, Arab Jews are Arabs. In another generation. . . ." We were eating at a pizzeria in the Hilton (Ismail's choice) as he expounded the virtues of "kindly Arafat, gentle Arafat." He knew Arafat well, he said. He contrasted Arafat's proposed "Palestine" to Israel, that "land of religious fanatics." He worked himself into a fury as he spoke, then just as suddenly the rage passed and he was grinning again. I went to make a phone call. When I returned, Ismail was chatting affably with a couple from Damascus. The man was a doctor who headed the Syrian Red Crescent, the equivalent of the Red Cross. He advised me that if I wanted a visa for Syria, "you must say you are very pro-Arab."

Thursday morning

I WAS invited to wait in the luxurious and palatial main headquarters of the Egyptian foreign ministry while my arrival was announced. Then I was ushered in for a taped interview I'd labored for ten days to achieve with Ismail Fahmy, Egypt's Foreign Minister. As I sipped good Turkish coffee from a china demitasse, Fahmy amiably lit my chain of cigarettes and answered my questions with angry, accusatory questions of his own; by the end of the interview he was shouting.

Israel's demand for a declaration of nonbelligerency was the first topic of discussion. Egypt, Fahmy asserted, could not consider Israel's request for formal assurances that Egypt would not attack her. "Nonbelligerency is a political and legal status. It does not come automatically. Nonbelligerency means permanent peace." Fahmy said Israel had "more responsibilities" than Egypt—he came close to saying that Egypt accepted no obligations or responsibilities toward Israel whatsoever—and he denigrated nonbelligerency as a "fallacy."

To Fahmy's mind, Geneva was the place where all these questions should be worked out, but Israel did not want to go. We discussed the then current justification for the "step-by-step" approach of the U.S. State Department as a substitute for Geneva. Fahmy indicated an acceptance of this approach only if it led "quickly" to Israel's "complete withdrawal from all Arab lands occupied in '67—and at the same time the recognition of the political rights of the Palestinians." I brought up Fahmy's recent public pronouncement, that either the Jewish state must be replaced by the "democratic secular state" demanded by Arafat or the state of Israel must move back, not to the 1967 borders but to the 1947 borders. Fahmy saw no inconsistency here. "The 1967 border is our own international boader. If *we* [Egypt] go back to the '67 borders, and on the Syrian front, and as far as Jerusalem is concerned, that does not solve the Palestinian problem. . . . Besides," he pointed out, "the 1947 [UN partition] resolution does provide for an Israeli—Jewish—state."

The best solution of all, Fahmy stated, was one which "both Israel and Palestinians accept, peaceful coexistence and two states—one Palestinian state with clear-cut borders, and a Jewish state." The locale, Fahmy said, would be "formalized through a long process of negotiations." Egypt would go along "if it is a good compromise, which gives everybody his own rights."*

* This idea is similar to that outlined by Mohammed Heykal, formerly the acknowledged spokesman of Egypt's leadership as editor of the influential newspaper *Al Ahram*. In 1971, Heykal called for a change of rhetoric—no more threats of throwing Israel into the sea—and a new political strategy aimed at reducing Israel to indefensible borders and pushing her into diplomatic and economic isolation. He predicted that "total withdrawal" would "pass sentence on the entire state of Israel." Last year, Sadat replaced Heykal with another editor, but Heykal is again surfacing as a political influence via private briefings with Sadat. Heykal has also recently published an article in the New York *Times*, and in a featured interview in *Newsweek* has declared that the "1947 partition" is Israel's "only" alternative to Arafat's "greater Palestine."

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Israel's fear that retreat to the 1967 borders would be dangerous struck Fahmy as irrelevant; Israel's absolute certainty that the 1947 borders would be suicidal Fahmy dismissed as unreasonable. And "if the Israelis would like to be unreasonable, we are in a better situation to be unreasonable and to react as such." If only Israel would let the Arabs live in peace, the Arabs would cause no problems, Fahmy said, even though "we have suffered here during the last twenty-six or twenty-seven years from the very existence or intrusion of Israel." His voice rose several decibels as he continued, punctuating every word by pounding his fist on the desk, "*They will go to Geneva sooner or later.* Nobody can run from this—*even the Israelis*! And the Palestinians *will participate in Geneva and this is a must*!"

I raised the issue of the public statement by Fahmy that any settlement of the Middle East conflict would have to include a fifty-year ban on further immigration to Israel. He said he was "appalled" at the negative reaction to this demand, because "really it is pacifist." If more Jews come to Israel, "we will have an explosion—at my expense, Syrian expense, Jordanian expense, Iraqi expense, Lebanese expense." Fahmy urged me to "go and find the big map in the Knesset": I would be shocked by Israel's plans for expansion. As national policy, he assured me, the Israelis intend to take all the land from the "Euphrates to the Nile. Israel is against human rights, against our civilization, against international order."

Then Fahmy launched a tirade against the Americans. He denounced the "embezzlement" and "blackmail" perpetrated by the "Jewish lobby," and asserted that the U.S. had lost its "freedom of action" in the world. The supply of American arms to Israel was both evil and futile. For "Who will survive at the very end? The three million [Israelis] or the 150 million [Arabs]?" Fahmy refused to discuss the Soviet role in Egypt in any context—the provision and installation of missiles at the Suez Canal in 1971, the sending of thousands of technicians, the massive supplies of Soviet arms and materiel used by the Arabs in 1967 and 1973, the furnishing of troops from North Korea, North Vietnam, and Cuba to fight on the Arab side, and so forth. Whenever I mentioned the Soviets, Fahmy attacked the U.S. or Israel, feigning incredulity that I presumed to bring up a matter so irrelevant to our discussion.

In closing Fahmy offered me a word of caution: if I wrote the truth about what I saw in the Middle East, *they* would never leave me alone, *they* would be after me, I would lose my job. Who? "The Jewish lobby in your country. I guarantee you . . . you will lose your job. *I am warning you!* I'm afraid for your future." As we parted I asked Fahmy what he would say if he were talking to the Israel Foreign Minister. Through gritted teeth Fahmy answered that the Israelis must "respect international order, be realistic, abandon personal ambitions. Egypt will take what Israel offers but there will be no peace on that basis. But this is the right moment for peace," he concluded. "And they are playing with *fire*!"

Thursday afternoon

I WAS sitting in the office of Khayam, the government press-information officer, along with another press attaché by the name of Maher. A man poked his head into the office. He was slight, with aquiline features above a disorderly beard, and he seemed uncertain whether he'd been sent to the right place. Maher recognized the bearded fellow and warmly introduced him as Swartz, a writer from France. Swartz seemed amazed at the chance meeting, reciprocated the greeting, and then answered Khayam's routine questions about affiliation and made his interview requests. Maher promised to do "anything we can" to assist Swartz and walked him out of the office arm in arm, only to return a moment later and address a barrage at Khayam in Arabic; the words "Swartz" and "Yehud," repeated frequently, were all I could recognize. The Frenchman was Jewish. As Maher spoke, Khayam reacted at first with surprise, then, enraged, he quickly passed on Maher's revelations by phone to someone else, crumpled the calling card Swartz had left behind and furiously flung the tiny wad into the wastebasket.

Saturday

THE drive out of Cairo to the Egyptian front lines east of the Suez Canal began about an hour behind schedule. Gamel, a member of the "President's Staff" who had been appointed to accompany me, was quiet, answering my questions perfunctorily and tersely. About half an hour out of the city the broad expanse of the Sinai began to resemble a lunar landscape, with the Adaka mountain range spread out in the distance. We passed soldiers directing trucks into fueling stations, areas of bivouac, billboards advertising cigarettes in Arabic and English. As we got nearer to Suez, tanks began to appear.

We crossed the Suez Canal, scene of the all-important "crossing" that nearly every Egyptian proudly proclaims as the "glorious victory of the October war." (What happened *after* the crossing is yet unknown or unimportant in Egypt.) The water was still. Our car stopped and we were joined by a Third Army major and a motorcycle escort, complete with screaming siren.

As we drove alongside the Israeli-built wall of sand, I asked Gamel and the major how well the Israelis had fought in the last war, and they laughed. "Egyptian soldiers can fight under *any* circumstances, without air power," while Israelis "need all security, and surrender when they have no cover. Egyptians fight to die, Israelis want to save their lives." Gamel described the Israeli shelters as "comfortable, with ice-water, a kind of luxury Egyptian soldiers don't have." Translating for

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the major, Gamel continued, "Egyptian soldiers can fight without eating or drinking." This brought to mind the food and water passed by the Israelis to the surrounded Egyptian Third Army —how did the major and Gamel feel about that memorable exchange (which I, though I did not say so, had witnessed and photographed)? They both exploded with laughter, looking at me as though I'd put my foot in my mouth. Calming down, Gamel finally explained, "There was no such thing—the Third Army had enough supplies for another month. Those supplies were only for Suez City civilians. It was the Third Army that surrounded the Israelis—the Third Army was *never* surrounded!"

We went through the rubble in Suez City, decimated target of battles dating back to the time of the British. Despite some reconstruction activity and a sprinkling of people recently planted there, Suez still looked like a ghost town. Osman Ahmad Osman, Egypt's Minister for Reconstruction, had told a group of visiting editors last summer that Egypt would drop reconstruction if the "peace" offered by Israel did not totally satisfy Egyptian demands. Did Gamel and the major agree with this position? Would the present efforts to rebuild prove as meaningless as those at the time of the 1970-71 War of Attrition? Gamel brusquely replied that the major didn't discuss political matters. Then the major and the motorcycle escort left us, and Gamel spent the two-hour drive back to Cairo justifying his claim that the Israelis had never surrounded the Third Army. He even drew a map for me, to prove his point.

Sunday afternoon

I WAS concluding a luncheon interview concerning the population explosion with Samira, one of Cairo's leading demographic experts. She'd been recommended by a mutual friend in the States, and her name had been mentioned often in Cairo as someone I must meet if I were interested in learning about Egypt's attempts to deal with the staggering swell of its birthrate. Samira spoke English fluently and seemed typical of a new breed of Egyptian women—charming, with well-groomed good looks, dynamic—qualities that men in Egypt labeled "aggressiveness." Here was a truly intelligent, reasonable woman, and I was dumbfounded when she abruptly launched into a bitter attack against Jews and the United States, in that order. She had, she said, no time for "people who don't see the issues the right way"; she was fed up with talk about the "Holocaust" and Israel's historical rights. The Holocaust was a "German thing we don't have time for." As Samira saw it, "Israel has no right to exist." It is composed of "religious fanatics, colonial people, all wanderers." Senator Fulbright, who had put things in "proper perspective," had in her view been deprived of his place in the Senate not because he lost an election but because he would not accept a "payoff" from the Jews. Suddenly, as though the outburst had never taken place, the furious intensity disappeared. She flashed a dazzling smile, promised to deliver the data and statistics I needed, offered a warm handshake, and hurried back to work.

Monday evening

A FESTIVE cocktail party at Ma'adi, an affluent, scrubbed suburb of Cairo, in the home of Bill, an expatriate from Michigan. Bill has been working in press relations at Cairo's American University. It was a fascinating mixed bag—dozens of guests, most of whom were Egyptian or American. A lovely woman talked about her job—she was called a "television news editor," but all the news was censored before she saw it. Hamdi, a law professor, was anxious to know what reactions I'd formed to his country, and to the "conflict," and suggested we adjourn the discussion to a small restaurant he knew in Cairo.

The restaurant was a small, inconspicuous storefront with appetizing cooking odors and trays of tehina, taamea, flatbread, and other Arab specialties displayed delicatessen style in a showcase. Hamdi ordered prudently—we could always get more, he assured the waiter—then he began to talk excitedly about Israel and the Jews. Israel was ruining the economies of many African countries that were ostensibly the recipients of her foreign aid—Tanzania and Ethiopia, for instance; these countries were being turned into Israeli "satellites." Israel was taking over everywhere. "It is bad for world progress, not in the interests of the Middle East or of the West to have a Jewish state." I said that her so-called "African satellites" consistently voted against Israel in the United Nations and had in fact cut off diplomatic ties to the Jewish state, becoming *de facto* puppets of the Soviet-Arab bloc. Hamdi brushed me aside. I obviously did not understand Jewish imperialism. "Egyptian Jews ruled my country here before Israel was a state. Jews would be ruling *me* if it weren't for the Middle East conflict."

Tuesday

I HAD arranged to meet Ali, a law professor who I had been assured was "well-informed, a man of the regime," a former politician—and of "common sense." Ali apologized profusely for the paralyzing traffic that had made him late. I asked if he could arrange an informal gathering of students—young people—and he promised to try.

The meeting with Professor Ali's group was held after hours, in one of the offices of an old and somewhat deteriorated enclosed-court building which Ali told me had once been the grand meeting place of Egypt's aristocrats. Unfortunately Ali could not remain at the meeting but he introduced me to his friends, and settled me in. Dr. Amin, a lawyer and former member of the foreign ministry, rose from behind his desk to

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greet me; he was a tall, powerfully built, well-dressed man with silver hair and mustache, and a deep reverberating voice. There were only two young people, he apologized—a young man who studied at Cairo University, and Dr. Amin's secretary, a girl about nineteen. The other guests included a well turned-out woman lawyer in her thirties, a balding former judge, and a fortyish "engineer-businessman." Comfortably ensconced in couches and chairs around Dr. Amin's desk, they exchanged a few reserved, awkward remarks, taking the official line on the "conflict" and the prospects for "peace." But by the end of thirty minutes Dr. Amin and his guests were passionately reacting to one another—never in dispute, but in corroboration of their common position. Except for the retired judge's occasional angry lapse into French, everyone spoke English, often all at once.

The only reason for Israel's existence, the group agreed, was to "make trouble all over the world." But Israel was fated to "fade out, disappear," because "there is no real reason for it to exist." As soon as Israel became "secure"—which meant shrinking to the size of a "very small state" with "no political activities" and few resources—the world would forget about it. They expressed exasperation at America's rejection of Arafat's "secular state." Was it so impossible to accept the dissolution of the Jewish state? Dr. Amin quoted long passages from a 1970 *Foreign Affairs* article by Nahum Goldmann—he said he knew it by heart. According to Dr. Amin, Goldmann proved that Zionism was based on fallacious premises. The Palestinians *would* have their land, and the Egyptians would get back the Sinai, which they'd held for "six thousand years"—even if it took "a hundred wars to get it." They seemed genuinely unaware that the Sinai had come into Egypt's possession only after World War I.

The world has "no time for religious fanatics," they went on. Israel is "finished" because it "does no good to anybody." "The Jews dominate England, France, the United States. Once upon a time a madman started persecuting the Jews . . . maybe he had a grudge against them. Maybe it was justified?" In fact, the Bible itself—they purported to know it well—told of incest and social diseases that Jews "like Abraham" had brought to Egypt. Jews had always "asked for trouble" and made a "show." "When Shakespeare wrote his Shylock, he drew him well." "Shylock is the universal Jew of all time, all place . . . not just Israel." "You see, the Jews want their pound of flesh."

They passionately defended PLO terrorism—"What should matter is to kill as many Jews—as many Israelis—as they can." "The terrorist attempts are never successful because the boys are not really destructive, they don't want to be barbarians, they don't have it in their blood, not like the Irish." "They are peaceful people, not like the cold-blooded Jews." It was "the difference between Shylock and Mohammed—the Jews are Shylock all over . . . not a peace-loving people." "Even when the Arabs were in domination of the world, they were never bloodthirsty; always peaceful, loving, and idealistic." "Most of the time," they affirmed, acts of Palestinian terrorism "are really maneuvered by the Jews themselves, by Israel." It is "more than just coincidence," they believed, that "every time the Jews . . . antagonize world opinion, the Arab commandos do something that arouses sympathy for the Jews." The Munich massacre of Israeli Olympic players had been "maneuvered by Israel." "They [the Jews] are very clever."

"Maybe the United States will force Israel into accepting a settlement," they suggested. "That's why Egyptians spend so much hard hope on the United States, not on idealistic grounds." The Arabs were all "very anxious" for a settlement, but Israel "would never sign to any borders whatsoever, because once the borders are settled, Israel won't exist any more. They know that and we know it better!"

Everyone was laughing now, but the tension seemed unrelieved. I forced a smile, mumbled something about the lateness of the hour—we'd been "discussing" for almost three hours—and thanked them for their kind cooperation. All assured me they had had "a very good time," and hoped I'd "take their good ideas" back home with me, and "do good work." It was very important to "do good work," because "Jews dominate mass communications." "There is no place for Arab voices to express their opinion in Europe or the United States."

* * * * *

We may ask, then: what does "moderate" mean in the present Middle East context? To describe the Egyptian position as "moderate" implies an attitude of reconciliation to peaceful coexistence with Israel. I found no such attitude. To all the people I spoke with (not one of whom could fairly be called an "extremist" within the spectrum of Egyptian political opinion), the position we call "moderate" does not mean reconciliation, but merely an acceptance of the withdrawal of Israeli troops to the pre-June 1967 borders, with no compensatory concession from the Arab side in the form of recognition. To many Egyptians, indeed, it means more, or perhaps I should say less: first, an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, and then a further push back to the lines envisioned in the 1947 partition plan, accompanied by the establishment of a Palestinian state: this, for instance, is the position of Mohammed Heykal and of Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy. That from such truncated borders the Arabs hope that Israel will in time shrink, through war or some other means of attrition, to absolutely nothing, is the unspoken but clear impli-

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cation of this position. It is often said that there is on the Arab side today a *de facto* recognition of Israel's existence, a recognition that Israel is a "fact," as Minister Fahmy called it in his conversation with me; but what Fahmy quite clearly conveyed was that to many Arabs Israel's "existence" means only the existence of an intrusion in the Arab world, called Israel, that must in time be eliminated.*

The use, or misuse, of the term "moderate" to describe the Egyptian position is not merely a matter of semantics; it alters psychological attitudes on a large scale. If one is a "moderate," his statements are treated as reasonable; conversely, any refusal by the opponent of a "moderate" to accede to his proposals is regarded as intransigence. To have attained the status of the "moderate" party is a major propaganda achievement. And the advantages accruing to the Arab cause from the widespread positive interpretation of it in the West are considerable—to Israel's virtually complete political isolation in the world there is now added a badge of moral opprobrium, for her alleged failure to respond to a proffer of peace. "Moderation," in other words, is a successful "line" to pursue.†

But does it conform to reality? So far Egypt has merely accepted whatever concessions could be extracted in negotiations from Israel, without offering any commitment to permanent peace in return. When, in Secretary Kissinger's last mission to the Middle East, some more concrete gesture in that direction was demanded by Israel, the Egyptians refused and the talks broke down. If further pressure does not induce resumption of private talks through some third party, the next act of the drama will be played at Geneva. But the fundamental question, as yet unanswered, remains the same: does Egypt's present policy portend a realistic shift toward genuine peace with Israel, or does she still envision Israel's eventual destruction—"peace" without Israel? As long as Egypt is evasive on this question, talk of a moderation in her position obscures reality and distorts the truth; the failure to correct such distortions can have the gravest of consequences.

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* It may be noted in this connection that Egypt's ambassador to the United States, Asraff Ghorbal, in an interview conducted in Argentina and published in *Marchar* earlier this year, declared that "extermination of Judaism in the Middle East is the point of departure for the process of liberation" of the Arab peoples. "It is our irrevocable decision to destroy Judaism," the ambassador asserted, "as our friends in the United States, Russia, and this country [Argentina] have promised."

† Upon returning from the Middle East I found that a widely hailed series on public television in this country, *Arabs and Israelis*, had made much of Arab willingness, especially Egyptian willingness, to coexist with Israel in peace; the series' sponsor expressed hope of using the power of television to "magnify the moderate." But in fact the producer of this series, Professor Roger Fisher of Harvard, is reported to have admitted that he edited out of filmed conversation the remark made by a highly respected Palestinian from Jerusalem, "There isn't a *single* Arab who recognizes the Jewish state," because it did not conform to the picture he wished to present of Arab sentiment.

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Notes on Ravel

Ned Rorem

OF THOSE composers I most love, Ravel is the single one through whose sound I feel the man himself. The feeling can rise straight from a harmony hit in passing, evoking within a split second the vastly non-abstract realm of Paris before I was born: my heart beats in a *salon faubourien* during conversation with an artist I never met in a time that is not, and real tears well up for the unknown which is hyperfamiliar. Time and again this happens as I'm seated at the piano playing Ravel or hearing him in a concert hall. No other composer pulls quite the same trick.

A CENTURY ago (on the hundredth anniversary of Jane Austen's birth) Ravel was born of solvent and understanding parents in the village of Ciboure near the Spanish frontier. These few facts color all that he became. His art straddled the border as it straddled centuries, being in texture as opulent as a tourist's notion of Iberia, in shape as pristine as Rameau, in intent no less modern than ragas or group therapy, and in subject matter mostly anti-romantic. Listen again to *Boléro*. ("It's my masterpiece," said the composer. "Unfortunately it contains no music.") French logic drenched in Basque mystery.

Mysterious for its lack of mystery was his worldly life: he didn't read much, didn't carouse, had avuncular crushes and a juvenile taste for enamel toys, heavy spices, mother figures, Siamese cats. Beneath garish shirts lay bland discretion.

But the unknown is good press. (Which is why a Maurice Sachs, dilettantish and mediocre, still holds the boards in France: his death was a publicized enigma, like Poe's, Lorca's, Desnos's.) The two most frequent questions about Ravel: Was he Jewish? Was he homosexual? (One assumes he couldn't be both.) Nobody knows, so everyone cares. Beyond this—and beyond the details of his long, sad agony—the man was less absorbing than the artist. But the artist's method has been finely documented. What to add? This musician, who over the years brought me more than any other, now leaves me at a loss. What we love we long to share but need to hoard.

WHAT we learn as children we question without question.

That Ravel's music was standoffish, elegant, well made, and casual I took as fact like the Oedipus complex or Eliot's genius, wondering uneasily why that special sound entered me like a heady draft of carnality throttling my Quaker frame to dwell on love and the pursuit of happiness.

It was the summer of 1936 that I first heard him, on the antimacassared upright in Oberlin. While kohlrabi fumes floated from the pantry, my cousin Kathleen performed the *Sonatina* which awakened me forever. Thinking the composer's name was Reville, I could locate no more of his music.

By 1937 I knew the spelling plus every work on record. I'd even begun composing a bit of Ravel myself.

On December 28th, a Tuesday brimming with sunshine, Father (I still picture him there on the sofa) read aloud from the Chicago *Tribune*: "French Composer Dies." (His name didn't yet merit a headline.) Gershwin had gone that summer. Now this. Moved, I sat down and played the *Pavane*. "How obvious," snorted a fourteen-year-old pal when I told him later.

LIKE Minerva he emerged full blown. Like Chopin he did not "advance," have periods, grow more complex. He entered the world with the true artist's faculty for self-appraisal and all his life wrote the same kind of music, consistently good. Goodness accounts, as with Chopin, for a proportionately short catalogue. Virginity accounts, as with Minerva, for concern about fertility through craft.

UNLIKE Chopin, he was no contrapuntalist. His canonic forays are abortive: those thousand examples of balanced clean lines are not counterpoints but harmonic shorthand. That Fugue in *Le Tombeau de Couperin* is idiosyncratic.

A NATION'S music resembles its language in all respects, and since French is the only European tongue with no rhythm (no tonic accent), any metricalization of a French phrase in music can be construed as correct. Lacking natural pulse, all French music becomes Impressionist. French composers when they opt for rhythm exploit it squarely, like children. The spell of *Boléro* resides in its non-variety, its contrast with Gallic speech which inherently rejects hypnosis, as opposed to American speech which, like jazz, is pure monotony. (Not for nothing was hypnosis first documented by a Frenchman, Charcot. Where rhythm is a stranger, rhythm is a prophet.)

Boléro has nothing to do with French music, yet only a Frenchman could have composed it.

RAVEL'S signatures are harmony and tune. His melodies are based on, and emerge from, chords. His

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identity (like Puccini's) lies in long line.

MELODY is horizontal. No matter how brief or fragmentary, melody necessarily unfolds, and so is experienced in time. Like sex and food, melody can be enjoyed in the Now. We react to a tune as it happens, although (unlike sex and food) we cannot judge the tune until it is over, whether the tune is three notes of Webern or three pages of liturgical chant.

Harmony is vertical. Harmony too may exist in Time (a single chord may be indefinitely sustained), although that is not its defining signal. (A shifting series or progression of chords is just that: chords, not chord—harmonies, not harmony.) Of course, a progression of simultaneous tunes —counterpoint, as it is named— produces at all moments harmony, that is, vertical noises that result from (but aren't specifically the purpose of) the juxtaposition of moving lines; but these moments are actually points in space rather than in time: no sooner sounded than they perish, or are retained like anti-matter only in memory, in the past, while melody is experienced solely in the present, like a movie.

DEBUSSY never, not once, even for violins, composed extended melody. His vocal writing, though tuneful, is glorified recitative, while the occasional *grande ligne* hints in his orchestral work are either cut short in mid-orgasm or exhaust themselves too soon for logic. (That brief outburst in *Iberia*'s middle movement brings no "expected" relief, merely dribbles off.) The Debussyan tunes which are lengthy, like the vast ending of *La Mer* or the soaring *Études,* are additive: literal repetitions piled up like pancakes.

Not that he couldn't melodize, but he had other fish to fry. The music of Debussy, that famed *roué,* leads somewhere, but not to sex. The music of Ravel, that presumed abstainer, usually emulates carnal fulfillment.

We know of Debussy's love-hate love of Wagner. But how did a non-linear type like him react to such limitless ropes of silk as Ravel wove for his dragonfly fiddles in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges,* or to the endless opening theme of *Daphnis et Chloé,* or to that unbroken languor of the solo flute? Do we admire in others what we too can do, or what we cannot?

Ravel and Debussy each had a strong personality and so were inimitable; but they were contemporaries, after all, bearing the same age relationship as Liszt to Franck, or as Copland to Barber. (Satie, whom we think of as Papa, actually lay between them like Lucky Pierre.) Once we agree it's unfair to compare them, it's fun to compare them.

THEIR color is abundant and varied, but always pure. The difference between French and German orchestration is that the former uses no doubling. Reinforcement, yes; but where in Strauss a string tune is thickened with winds or brass, in Ravel the fat is skimmed off and held in abeyance. This makes for what is known as *transparent* instrumentation, a sound paradoxically opulent and lean. By extension the sound applies to his piano solo and vocal works. Sumptuous bones.

ANOTHER unchallenged fact: Ravel's taste, the *good* taste—*son goût exquis*—which we accept at face value along with his "sophisticated" wit.

What *is* taste (or wit, for that matter) in music? For programmatic pieces it can be defined, but can the definition be extended (like the orchestral transparency of his piano works) to abstract pieces?

If taste means decorum, boundary, *mesure,* then Ravel's jeweled box holds jewels, Debussy's jeweled box holds a heart. But to a Mahler that heart is candy, to a Puccini it's gall.

Yes, he had taste. Like all Frenchmen Ravel was blinded by Poe whose essay, *The Philosophy of Composition,* influenced him (he claimed) more than any music; yet he never actually envisaged setting Poe's fiction, as Debussy had planned with the *House of Usher.* Like all Frenchmen Ravel was approached by the gaudy Ida Rubinstein, whose spoken voice (that least musical of instruments, in contrast to the singing voice) was the requisite solo for the works she commissioned; yet he never succumbed to using that voice, as Debussy did in his *Martyre.*

Alone, subject matter determines taste in music. (Music without subject matter cannot be argued as tasteful or tasteless, there are no criteria.) Murder, war, and amorous passion being the texts for nine-tenths of lyric theater, and such texts being beyond taste, most opera is tasteless. Again, Ravel was tasteful there: his sonorous stories never grazed grown-up matters except in parody (licentious doings in *L'Heure espagnole)* or from a safe distance (slave revolt in *Chansons madécasses).* Otherwise he stayed close to home, which is to say, close to the non-sexual side of Colette. Nor did he ever, save for a brief minute in the early song *Sainte* on a poem of Mallarmé, musicalize even a quasi-religious verse: the gods forbid such breach of taste.

Yet who does not forget himself at *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*? Colette's very stage directions are high poetry, and contribute to making this my single most preferred work of the century. Why? Because, despite its length, the quality of inspiration remains appropriately fevered while exploiting (no less adroitly than Bach's passions and Wagner's dramas do) each aspect of sonorous speech: instrumental opulence, both solo and orchestral, and vocal expertise, both solo and choral.

(Ravel and Colette, as inevitable a pair as Gilbert and Sullivan, scarcely knew each other.)

How unfair to accuse him of taste! To hear *Daphnis et Chloé* is to hear great art (despite the hideous Heavenly Choirs, so copied by soundtracks that we hear the original now as a copy), but to see the score is to blush. Each "telling" tune illustrates a mawkish stage direction: the violas pose a question to which the shepherd opens his arms, the harp sweeps upward as the lovers reunite, etc.—what we call Mickeymousing.

After Ravel's death his brother, witnessing his first animated car-

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toon, declared, "That's how *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* should be mounted," a declaration echoed by many another tasteful Frenchman. (Disney is second to Poe on France's short list of esteemed Americans.) *L'Enfant* should never be mounted in any form; like *Saint Matthew Passion,* the work's tightness is too elaborately delicate to support visuals.

(As for wit, who can define wit either, as it relates to non-vocal music?)

INFLUENCES we avow are, of course, the conscious ones—those we're sure don't show. Once assimilated, the property becomes ours. Magnanimously we admit the theft, safely knowing that no one detects the original beneath our paint. (Unconscious influence alone is damning.) Thus Ravel announces Saint-Saëns, Schubert, Mozart as his progenitors. Who would guess it?

His influence on others? On Poulenc it is obvious, though no one ever points out the harmonic progression of three chords in Ravel's *L'Indifférent* (1905), pilfered intact fifty years later to form the motto of Poulenc's *Carmélite* opera. More interestingly, no one ever points out the cadenza for two clarinets in Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole* (1908), pilfered intact three years later to form the motto for Stravinsky's *Petroushka* ballet. That bitonal Petroushka sound outlined Stravinsky's harmony for the next decade, and by extension most Western music for the next half-century, yet the sound demonstrably stems from a few casual bars in the French musician's pseudo-Spanish idiom.

HE EVOLUTIONIZED keyboard virtuosity more than anyone since Liszt, yet his complete solo piano works fit comfortably into one evening's program.

In his sixty-two years Ravel, who worked constantly, didn't turn out more than eight hours' worth of music, as contrasted to Debussy's sixteen, Beethoven's thirty, Wagner's fifty, Bach's seventy, Ives's two thousand, or Webern's two. Of those eight hours none is slipshod or routine. Not that he was a miniaturist, he was a perfectionist. So was Bach a perfectionist—different times, different mores—but a page of Ravel orchestration is twenty times busier than a page of Bach's. (Still, since Stravinsky was twice as busy as Ravel, yet twice as prolific, we draw no conclusions.)

HE WAS a classicist, yes, sometimes, in those square-structured suites, concertos, and pastiches with their recapitulations and so-called symmetrical melodies. (Symmetrical is a poor word, since time cannot have symmetry.) But so many other pieces are truly Impressionist—all of *Gaspard de la nuit,* most of *Miroirs,* many of the straight orchestra numbers (though none of the thirty-three songs, curiously, since songs, being based on words, are by definition musically free). Such pieces are not so much heard as overheard, come upon, already transpiring before they start, evanescent. Made solely of middles, without beginnings or ends, they emerge from nowhere, from a mist, trouble us for a dazzling while, then without notice vanish, like Scarbo, fade like Ondine. Any of these sparklers could be convincing shorter or convincing longer for they have been spinning always, and will always continue, though only within human earshot for those fugitive minutes.

How to perform such pieces! Not, certainly, like the composer himself with 19th-century mushiness, sabotaging the perfect interplay of his puzzles. Vague sounds, to make their point, need precise rendition, just as white on a canvas needs additional pigments to have meaning as white. Play what you see, the notes will take care of themselves. Add no nuances, they are imbedded in the score—not, to be sure, as verbal indications but as notated musical calculations. (Yet my heart sinks regularly when baritones, reaching the closing bars of the air to Dulcinée, slow down the meter along with the rhythm: Ravel scored a retard by elongating note values, not by writing the word retard.)

He needs no interpretation; he should be played like Bach, the way Gieseking played him. (Bach takes interpretation; he should be played like Ravel, the way Landowska played him.)

I HAVE wanted to disqualify what is often claimed, and to add what is not often said. So I have not bothered to mention that Ravel was five feet tall, or that he never married. I used to know people whom Ravel knew well (soprano Madeleine Grey, violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, composer Roland-Manuel), but none ever revealed much about the man or about his musical attitudes. Today they are dead, Ravel is a hundred, and facts about him grow as unreachable as facts about Shakespeare.

Having touched on all variables of music as they pertained to Ravel, let me recall them quickly:

His rhythmic sense, characteristically French, is vague, except where consciously italicized.

He made no pretense at being a contrapuntalist, and his few stabs at canon (with the exception of the ecstatic false-fugue at the close of *L'Enfant*) are banal.

He was a harmonist born. His harmonies, both in their vertical selves and in sequence, contain the inevitability of greatness, are almost embarrassingly tactile, and are always recognizable as his despite their providing the unique base for all chordal progressions in pop music for fifty years.

His tunes, spun out for mile upon silver mile, locate him in a camp far from Beethoven or even Debussy who glued together (always ingeniously their truncated fragments.

His instrumental hues (again characteristically French) are unadulterated. But if the French have always been noted for economical means, which in turn are the roots of taste, no one has ever focused on taste in, say, Franck or Fauré.

What is called Ravel's wit is his removal, when choosing texts to set, from sober adult romance. (But is the anguished *Trio* witty? And who finally dares call it or any music anguished?)

The effects of his music, assumed to be restrained and upper class (so as to distinguish them easily from Debussy's), are really non-intellectual and replete with voluptuous yearning. These effects were as fully realized in his earliest works as in his last, in his Impressionist pieces as in his formal ones—the latter being, ironically,

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more "physical" than the former if only because (unlike Debussy) they relied on sonata form which is the standard musical emulation of sexual intercourse.

The more we know someone's music, the more we know how it should *not* go. Distance is not imitated by softness. If, for example, the more impressionistic of Ravel's piano pieces sound as though they were being eavesdropped upon—like something we become aware of as being whispered downstairs—then they must project. Projection comes through precision, the articulation of musical syntax which is always crystal clear on Ravel's printed page.

EVEN without his music, the thought of him makes me feel good.

Nobody dislikes Ravel, and nobody disapproves. Can that be said of any other musician?

Movies

Heroines & Their Hairdresser

William S. Pechter

IT SEEMS I waited too long to write my obligatory piece on "The Vanishing Heroine in American Movies," and events have now passed me by. One swallow may not make a summer, but three or four? In any event, of the five actresses nominated for this year's Academy Award, only one of them played the notoriously conventional female role of hooker (Valerie Perrine, in what's essentially the hooker's role in *Lenny*). Of the other four, all played strikingly assertive, and, in three cases, strong-willed and independent women; and that acknowledged exception to the rule, Barbra Streisand, wasn't even among the nominees.

Mabel Longhetti (Gena Rowlands), in John Cassavetes's *A Woman Under the Influence,* is neither strong-willed nor independent, but she's assertive beyond ignoring and to the point of stridency. What she wants, or believes she wants, is just to be otherwise—not to break out of the housewifely mold, but to fit in—yet she can't. "Tell me what you want me to be. I can be any way you want me," she implores her lumpish, blue-collar husband, Nick (Peter Falk), who only replies rather gallantly that he wants her to be just who she is. In some time less enlightened than our own, Mabel's words might be understood to stand in some straightforward relation to her feelings; now we have the perspective to see them as the symptom of a problem which she, pathetically, can't see for herself. This housewife isn't mad for failure to adjust to her role, but because the role itself breeds madness. It's her very trying to live up to her husband's and society's expectations of her good behavior as a wife and mother that proves her undoing.

This, at any rate, is one interpretation of *A Woman Under the Influence* (though it's subject to others), and it's certainly the interpretation that's winning the movie its current acclaim. Some movies prosper in their timing, while, for just such reasons, others fail. A movie like *Up the Sandbox,* which was about a woman who's basically fulfilled in her roles of wife and mother (and wants mainly a little more free time), could have succeeded at another time, but instead got condemned for its meliorism and insufficiently raised consciousness (though it has itself partly to blame for inappositely flirting with feminist issues). But *A Woman Under the Influence,* which might well have passed relatively unnoticed, like most of Cassavetes's other films, a few years ago, is a work whose time has come. And though this depiction of the anguish of being a wife and the oppressiveness of marriage is the work of a director whose previous films have depicted the pathos of being a husband and celebrated marriage on impulse, it isn't really a case of Cassavetes's new film exploiting feminist ideas in any opportunistic way (ideas of any kind being foreign to Cassavetes's work). It's just that those ideas are nowadays ubiquitously available, and adventitiously lend his new film weight and substance.

What's troubling about this isn't the overrating of the film itself so much as the number of people who are apparently able to see in Mabel's situation an expression of the general plight of women in our society. No doubt, there *are* women for whom marriage is a dungeon and who feel chained there by the social roles marriage entails. But is Mabel one of them? Mabel *wants* to be a conventionally good wife and mother. Of course, she lands herself in a mental institution for trying, and the implication is that trying to be such things can only land one in a mental institution. Mabel's "madness" is thus, in a Laingian sense, creative: a privileged state of heightened insight; and to emphasize her "normality" there's a family gathering upon Mabel's release from the hospital in which all assembled are seen to behave, in ways that are socially acceptable, quite as crazily as anything we've seen of Mabel. But that others may also be crazy in no way makes Mabel more sane.

There *is* an argument to be made against Mabel's commitment, though it's not, I think, the Laingian but the Thomas Szasz-civil-

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libertarian one: that others shouldn't have the power to institutionalize Mabel merely because her deviant behavior embarrasses or even distresses them. Yet Mabel's madness does bring her not insight but pain; her behavior produces effects and responses in others different from what she desires; it is dysfunctional. To see her hectoring passers-by in the street, in her little girl's get-up of ankle-socks and barrette, is to know this, and to aestheticize or ideologize her pain by calling it creative is to turn a deaf ear to it, and is a species of callousness. And if it seems to us, in our enlightenment, that the roles to which she aspires are in themselves discreditable ones, we nevertheless are, I think, as little entitled to forbid those roles to her as we are to deny beneficiaries of the civil-rights movement their right to become American Legionnaires. Mabel needs help—a baldly simple fact blurred over in the film by her being delivered by a Dracula-like doctor to the horrors of electric-shock therapy, and by an appeal to a doctrinaire commitment to the preservation of some personal identity which being a wife and mother are thought necessarily to submerge.

Yet what is that identity of Mabel's with which those roles of wife and mother are supposed to conflict? For all that Cassavetes's films are reputed to be centered on people—rather than, say, technique—one looks in vain for an answer to this question. Where the character of Mabel ought to be is a blank space captioned "Victim"; despite her array of colorful eccentricities, she's as much a blank as the personality-less heroine of *The Stepford Wives* with whom we're supposed to share the fear that she's in danger of being sapped of her personality. As Mabel's chief victimizer, Nick has at least a few traits one can identify, though this doesn't mean one can reconcile the bluff but "supportive" Nick of the earlier parts (who insists to one of his construction-gang pals that Mabel's just unusual, not crazy) with the insensitive clod who consigns Mabel to shock treatment, plans a huge surprise party for her return home, and slaps her around near the finish; he's simply a different character with the same name brought on to clinch the film's case. It's not that Nick develops; characters in Cassavetes's films don't develop; they shift and swerve into new directions. And Cassavetes's technique—for the prolix repetitiousness of his films *is* a technique—is to make one lose track of what's gone before and accept the new character as a development of the old by dint of sheer reiterative insistence: to bludgeon one into forgetfulness.

In fact, the people at the center of Cassavetes's films aren't characters but actors, and what is created by actors in the absence of characters isn't drama but dramatic moments—usually big, climactic ones. Such stuff may be what actors' dreams are made of, but it's remarkable how ill-served they've been by it, for in all of Cassavetes's films probably the only truly memorable performance is that of Bobby Darin in *Too Late Blues*, Cassavetes's most conventionally-scripted film apart from *A Child Is Waiting* (which he's disowned), and a film which, though it falls apart, contains what's probably the single best directed sequence in any Cassavetes film in a beautifully built scene of a poolroom brawl. (I should perhaps qualify this by saying I haven't yet been able to steel myself to the experience of seeing all of Cassavetes's *Husbands*, despite its several television showings.) In Mabel in *A Woman Under the Influence*, Cassavetes has handed his wife, Gena Rowlands, a part that's almost indecently rich in big moments and golden opportunities—it's virtually one prolonged mad scene—and yet when one thinks back on her manneristic *tour de force* there's almost nothing, aside from some plaintive mugging and a few Bronx cheers, to hang on to. For all that this is Mabel's film, probably the truest moment in it belongs to Nick when, while Mabel's away, he takes his children to the beach, and manages to overcome the occasion's tension only by getting the kids slightly drunk and initiating them into the vast brotherhood of the beer can. Nick and Mabel together share the moment that's probably the movie's most quietly affecting one: the two of them preparing to go to bed together after Mabel's return home, as the film suddenly swerves into a faintly hopeful mood, and a muted suggestion (reminiscent of the conclusion to *Scenes from a Marriage*) of the healing power of two people clinging to one another in the dark. And then, before we can think too much about that in light of all that's gone before, the movie ends.

I SPOKE of the Cassavetes influence on Martin Scorsese when I reviewed the latter's *Mean Streets*.* Scorsese's new film, *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, still shows signs of the influence, chiefly in its excessively lunging, thrusting visual style, and in its use in a supporting role of the actress (Lelia Goldoni) who played the female lead in Cassavetes's first film, *Shadows*, and who's been seen in sufficiently few films since for her appearance here to constitute an act of homage.

Alice gets off to a none-too-promising start with its heroine, Alice Hyatt, as a little girl in Monterey, California, vowing to make it to the top and be a better singer than Alice Faye, in a scene redolent of movie-bred fantasy and shot in a facetious recreation of the style of 40's movies, complete with artificial sunset. The film then jumps to the present, with Alice living as a housewife in New Mexico, tyrannized along with her young son by a brutish truck-driver husband, whom she married, we gather, because he promised to take her places and was (as she tells her son) a "good kisser." The husband is killed in a crash, and Alice and her son take to the road across the American Southwest in an attempt to get back to Monterey and resume her aborted career as a singer. She runs out of money and gets a singing job in a cocktail lounge at a stopover along the way, where she takes up with man number two, an assembly-line worker in a ten-gallon hat (nicely played by Harvey Keitel of *Mean Streets*), who's younger than she and pursues her with ingratiating boyishness, but turns out to be married, a wife-beater, and psychopathically violent. She moves on,

* COMMENTARY, January 1974.

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but again her money runs out, and she takes another job: this time, as a waitress in a truck stop. There she meets a third man, a rancher (played by Kris Kristofferson at his most mellow), who seems to love her and be "supportive," but who at one point blows up at her son and strikes him. Alice flees in the face of what seems another instance of male bullying, but the man succeeds in persuading her to marry him.

I offer this short, schematic reading of *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* only to indicate what it might have been—more female victimization by men and by popular culture—so as better to appreciate what it actually is. For somewhere along the road it travels, the neat message *Alice* might have contained gets sidetracked, as the movie increasingly opens itself up to the confusion of life around it. And rarely has a movie thrived so well on confusion. At once mocking movie conventions and indebted to them (particularly to the wisecracking heroine of 30's movies), both respecting what Alice wants from life and subjecting her expectations to scrutiny, the film ends up with more questions than answers, but they're the right questions.

Has Alice judged this third man correctly, or is she making yet another mistake? (Her son, a precocious brat, well warrants discipline, but the implications of the scene in which the rancher strikes him remain ambiguous.) Will the man in fact give up his ranch as he says he will to get Alice to Monterey and enable her to pursue her career as a singer, and, in any case, should he be expected to sacrifice his career for hers any more than she should have once had to sacrifice hers for her husband's? And what of the things Alice wants themselves? Monterey may represent a missed opportunity, the site of a wrong turning and a path not taken, but it's also the place from which she was once apparently glad to get away via marriage. And though to sing better than Alice Faye may be no exalted ambition, it's doubtful, from the wispy singing voice we hear, that Alice has the talent to do even that. Indeed, one is left wondering whether Alice will really *either* marry *or* get to Monterey. The film's last shot is of Alice and her son, the rancher nowhere in sight, walking together through the town where she waits on tables toward a hazy horizon crammed with the signs of motels and cocktail lounges, one of which reads, "Monterey."

Probably some of these questions are not so much deliberately posed by the film as they are questions which inadvertently arise from it, some of them challenging the film's own assumptions (and, with them, assumptions that are currently in the air everywhere). One isn't always sure, and I don't think it much matters. *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* has an open, unfinished feel which may not bespeak a polished work of art, but which greatly suits it. And it has also, as do few other recent movies, a sense of utter contemporaneity: of being directly plugged in to the way we live now. It's uniquely a product of the movies: a blend of pervasive fantasies and a sometimes surprisingly stinging realism, of old movies and present-day life. Without that slap he gives her son, Alice's rancher would be too good a thing to believe in—another movie happy ending—but the slap takes place, and we feel it.

This isn't to say one can't discriminate between what's good and what isn't in *Alice*. Some of the film's depiction of Alice's options seems overly loaded: she's just too good for her truck-driver husband (while he's too bad to believe in), and one can't really imagine Alice marrying him; nor, for that matter, is one entirely convinced that even loneliness could account for her taking up with man number two. And the "cleverness" of the opening is unworthy of the film, while some of the cute repartee between mother and son leans too much toward the mechanical routines of a *Paper Moon*. But the film's sheer liveliness and vitality get it over such humps, and it's kept buoyant, above all, by the delightfully tough-minded and good-humored performance of Ellen Burstyn as Alice (and by the uproarious performance of Diane Ladd as Alice's foul-mouthed waitress friend). And though the film may lack the striking surface of a *Mean Streets*, it seems to me in several ways an even more impressive piece of work by Scorsese, at least part of the credit for which must go to its writer, Robert Getchell. Together they've made a film which lives here, confusedly, with us in the eye of the storm: a film about a single woman trying to make her way which both draws on our popular culture's stock of images of "starting life anew" and adds to them, and which will enter, I think, into the way we now think of such things.

"Los Angeles," as perhaps not everyone has heard, "has become what it is because of the bright heat, which turns people into narcissists and sensuous provocateurs. The atmosphere seems to infantilize sex: sexual desire is despiritualized; it becomes a demand for immediate gratification."* Which goes to show one can learn all sorts of wondrous and amazing things from movie criticism these days when it's sufficiently inspired; and when a movie comes along which can inspire sociological breakthroughs such as the above, you can be sure it's on to something big. The something big that *Shampoo* is on to is that venerable intellectual sport known as baiting the bears of Beverly Hills—but with a difference. These sybaritic denizens of lotus-land no longer represent merely the moral rot of their own lives. Now they stand for —you guessed it—America.

It would be interesting to research the genesis of *Shampoo* (which is scripted from a story by Warren Beatty by Beatty and by Robert Towne of *The Last Detail* and *Chinatown*) to see at what point it became two movies strenuously trying to be one or if it were always so schizoid a creation. That it is, is all the more a shame because the "little" picture in it trying to borrow importance from the "big" one could well have been a less compromised success on its own. The amorous entanglements of George, hairdressing priapus of Beverly Hills, zooming along on his motorcycle with his phallic blow dryer tucked in belt to service his

* Pauline Kael, "Beverly Hills as a Big Bed," the *New Yorker*, February 17, 1975.

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"heads," are amusing, and the film is shrewdly alert to the intricate ground rules governing those alternating truces and hostilities between the sexes. The movie is briskly if unexcitingly directed by Hal Ashby of *The Last Detail*, and only the effetely pretty photography of Laszlo Kovacs seems (as it usually does) a major mistake. As George, Warren Beatty, who's been refining his halting delivery into the instrument of a fine comic timing, has a part he's grown into. And Lee Grant, Jack Warden, Goldie Hawn, and Julie Christie all contribute deftly, with the last having a rowdy drunk scene involving language that used to get Lenny Bruce carted off to jail.

George is a Don Juan who enjoys what he does—sort of. Everything, he insists, is "great!" but his expression remains perpetually harried and slightly befuddled. Somehow George's endless desire to please (and his inexhaustible capabilities) lead to his finding himself making love to the wife, daughter, and mistress (one of George's ex-lovers) of Lester, the man he's trying to persuade to back him financially in the opening of his own hairdressing salon, in an elaborate feat of juggling kept aloft partly by Lester's assumption that George, being a hairdresser, must be gay. (George's exploitation of this false assumption when Lester almost catches him *in flagrante delicto* provides the film's funniest moment.) But eventually, as the Feydeau conventions dictate, the strands must be disentangled, and George is found out both by Lester and by another girl friend of George's who'd supposed him faithful. In the end, George realizes, he says, that it's his ex-lover, now Lester's mistress, whom he really loves, and he tearfully begs her to marry him, declaring, "You're the only one I trust." (One has to take this declaration on faith since there's nothing depicted of their relationship in the film to indicate why it would be so, or why George hasn't till this moment discovered that it is.) But it's too late, and she goes off with Lester; and in our last view of George we're meant to see that, despite all his hectic sexual activity (which one has no doubt will soon resume), he's essentially a lonely and pathetic figure. Frankly, my own feeling (and that, I suspect, of many other males in the audience) is that I wouldn't much mind being so pathetic.

But if one sees some of the pathos of the classic Don Juan in *Shampoo*, its twist is that finally George seems less the deceiver being meted out his punishment than the used and discarded plaything of the women he's supposedly been deceiving. Indeed, what distinguishes this version of Don Juan and gives it its bite is its streak of misogyny. When Lester's mistress taunts George for establishing himself with the wife of the man from whom he hopes to obtain money, George snaps back, "I don't fuck anybody for money. I do it for fun," and the remark rings true. But though the women in the film may keep George around for fun, none of them, wives and mistresses all, would allow pleasure to interfere with business—with doing it for money. Perhaps the most heartfelt words in the film are George's comment to Lester on the relations between men and women after Lester has found George out and is contemplating having some hired thugs give him a beating. "All they talk about is how some guy fucked them over," George says of the women in his shop. "They know we want to nail them, and they don't like it. Well, they like it and they don't like it." And Lester, recognizing in George less his humiliator than an equally tattered veteran of the war between the sexes, not only lets George go unscathed, but doesn't even foreclose the possibility of yet investing in him.

So far, so good, but, unfortunately, *Shampoo* presses further. For the events of the film are played out in the hours surrounding election eve, 1968, and are continually counterpointed with shots of Nixon-Agnew posters and television clips of one or the other of them saying things like, "What can a President do to affect the moral tone of the country?" As another inspired critic has put it, "The film is set a freeway or so away from San Clemente . . . and it thrusts us into an indigenous lifestyle . . . at the precise moment that that lifestyle was to sweep beyond its natural habitat to become a national ethic."

To which one must say: no, the idea that there's some parallel between the felonies of the Nixon administration and the round-robin bed-hopping of this film's cast of characters simply will not wash. One *could* make an argument for the connection between the Nixon victories (particularly the second) and the electorate's self-absorption, but I suspect it would have to do with something a good deal more subtle and complex—and more ugly—than the self-absorption of George and company in *Shampoo*. The characters in *Shampoo* are hurting no one, except possibly themselves. Though Lester's supposed to be a contributor to the Republican party (with hints he may be a conduit for shady funds), one can as easily imagine him espousing some liberal cause. Politically, he and the others aren't significant, but irrelevant.

As if to underline how far the film strays from what it knows and does best when it leaves farce to strive for social satire, almost all the jokes of the latter sort seem either oddly off target—like the scene of the Republican senator from California performing interminable Indian chants at a Nixon victory party—or barn broad—like the easy laugh got from Lester's recounting the deep satisfaction he had in hosting a charitable picnic for blind children. Yet it seems to be the portentous "big" film in it and not the knowing "little" one that's earning *Shampoo* its raves. If so, I worry less about a single instance of artistic inflation in *Shampoo* than for the precedent—for how many other movies may be tempted to pump themselves up and acquire "relevance" by the simple expedient of splicing in some Nixon-Agnew footage. We may yet be in for *A Woman Under the Influence of the White House* and *America Doesn't Live Here Anymore*.

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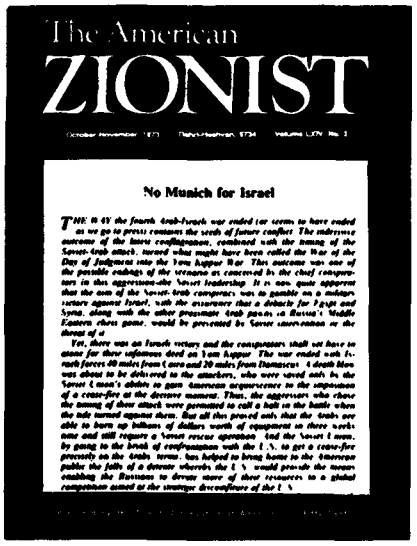

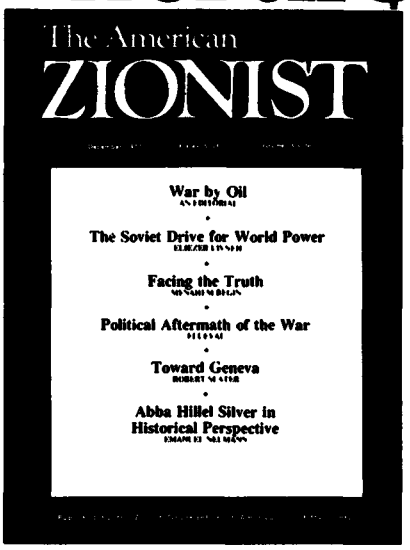

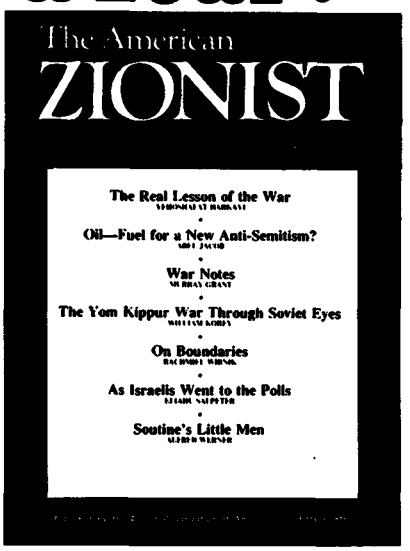

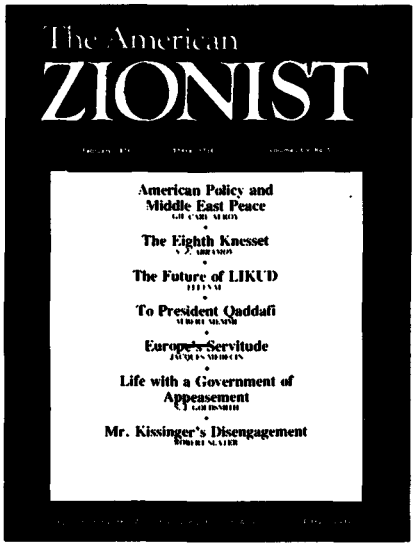

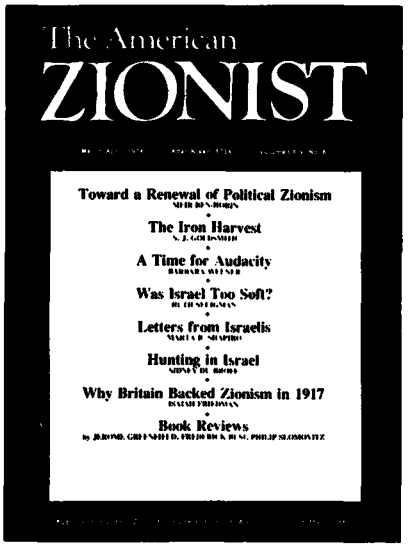

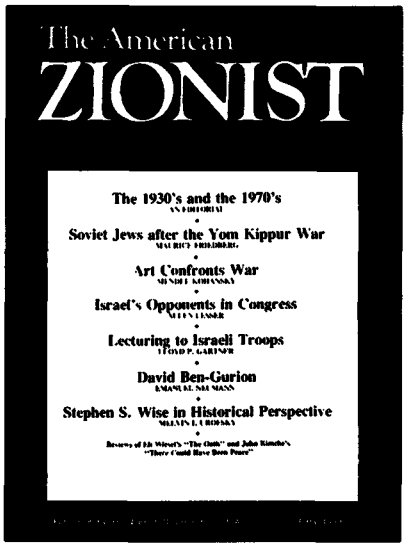

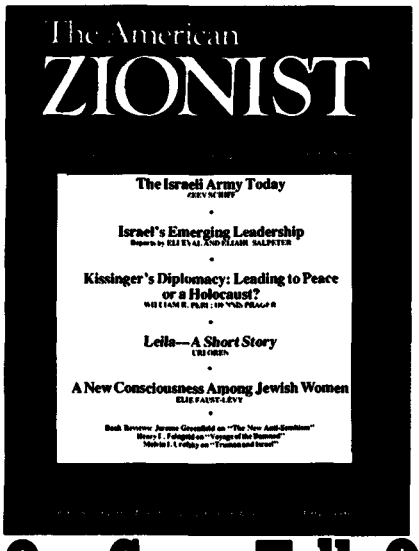

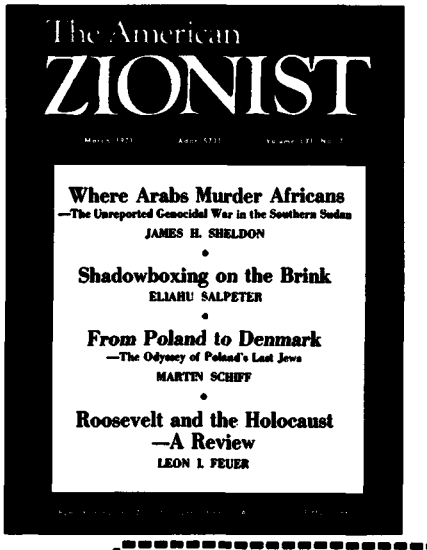

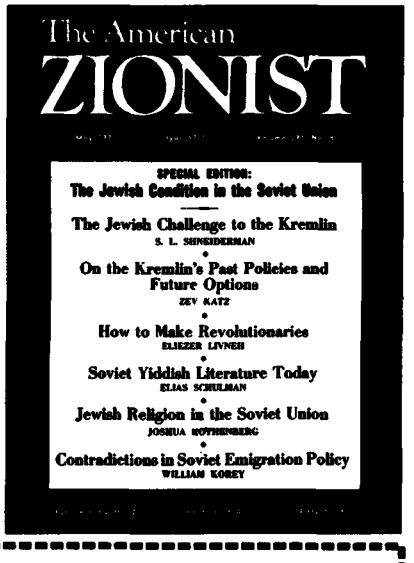
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The Nixon White House

BEFORE THE FALL. By WILLIAM SAFIRE. *Doubleday. 704 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by SUZANNE R. WEAVER

WILLIAM SAFIRE, a former Nixon speechwriter and now a columnist for the New York *Times*, has published a memoir of his White House years that is personal, anecdotal, and episodic, as political memoirs tend to be. What sets Safire's book apart from many others of its genre is that the author is so highly ambivalent toward the administration and the President he served. The book therefore provides evidence to support whatever opinions a reviewer may hold about Safire, Nixon, and Watergate: that Safire is presenting valuable information about hitherto underreported aspects of the Nixon administration, that his position in it prevented him from seeing its essence, or that he is still serving as its apologist; that Nixon's fall is not fully explicable, that it stemmed from flaws in the polity as a whole, or that its roots lay in his personal pathologies. The book, like its author's description of Richard Nixon, is a "layer cake"; it offers at least a little something for every taste.

Yet Safire's account should not be simply dismissed—though it already has been by some critics—because of his attachment to the administration. And Safire's memories are not entirely undigested. As for his position in the administration and his stance toward it, he was not an omniscient observer and is not a disinterested one; but he does give the reader more clues than some other political diarists have done about where to make the necessary corrections. Safire, by his own telling, was a member of Nixon's "outer inner circle." On the one hand, he was a Nixon partisan and was trusted as such. He had resolved to work for Nixon as early as the Moscow kitchen debate, and he had been in the Nixon entourage from the beginning of the comeback in the mid-1960's. He was neither the most liberal nor the most conservative member of the White House staff or its speechwriting team, and so he aroused no systematic ideological suspicion. He was prepared to act as a strong advocate of administration policies and on at least one occasion to engage in shady rumor-mongering on their behalf.

Furthermore, Safire had access to a good deal of inside information. Though his main job was to write speeches rather than give direct policy advice or oversee the details of practical politics, he is persuasive in suggesting that President Nixon cared about speeches, that Nixon's ideas and behavior in crafting them revealed something important about the man, and that the speeches were occasions for significant internal administration debate. Safire also participated in more general discussions of administration policy and strategy, and throughout them all he kept copious notes on what he saw and heard.

But there were limits to what he knew, and there also were limits to his partisanship. He was in the end not a counselor or an administrator but a writer, and one with an ironic cast of mind. More important, he—like some others in the administration, such as Leonard Garment and Daniel P. Moynihan—had temperamental if not ideological ties to the intellectuals, to the press, and to the whole establishment that evoked so much suspicion and distaste in many Nixon loyalists. His associations with this other world finally produced a great and palpable symbol of administration mistrust, a Kissinger-ordered tap on his telephone; but even apart from the tap, both his position and his habits of thought and association barred him from certain kinds of participation and knowledge.

These circumstances of knowledge and posture produce an account of the Nixon White House that tries with some conscientiousness to connect Watergate to the whole of the administration but that is generally at its most vivid when it is not explicitly engaged in that effort. Safire's White House emerges as a place that was in many ways no better and no worse than its recent predecessors. First of all, Safire's episodes argue, it was not simply a place run by martinets ordering mediocrities to crush imagined enemies in behalf of no recognizable policy goals. The administration did not compare unfavorably with its predecessors in the talent and seriousness of those it recruited to the White House. Mediocrities there were, but people like Burns, Kissinger, Moynihan, and Shultz were not among them. And the men of substance were hardly disposed to surrender easily what they considered to be their proper role in Presidential decision-making. Moreover, as Safire tells it, such men were rewarded for their talents: Nixon took very seriously the views of persons he thought to be *"hommes sérieux."*

If policy-making talent found rewards in the Nixon White House, it also seems that policy questions were debated explicitly and on their merits rather than as mere matters of court politics. Such debate took place over the issue of integration, over the New Federalism, over the Family Assistance Plan, over wage-and-price controls. H. R. Haldeman, the keeper of the Presidential gate, encouraged it; so did Nixon himself. Moreover, Safire says, it is too simple to conceive of the administration as a victim of "groupthink" and its pressures toward conformity; one's status there did not stand or fall on one's ability to reinforce the policy views of one's teammates.

Finally, the book contends, it is not true that the administration was without policy purpose or entirely without a redeeming sense of irony about itself. Policy seri-

SUZANNE R. WEAVER *teaches political science at Yale.*

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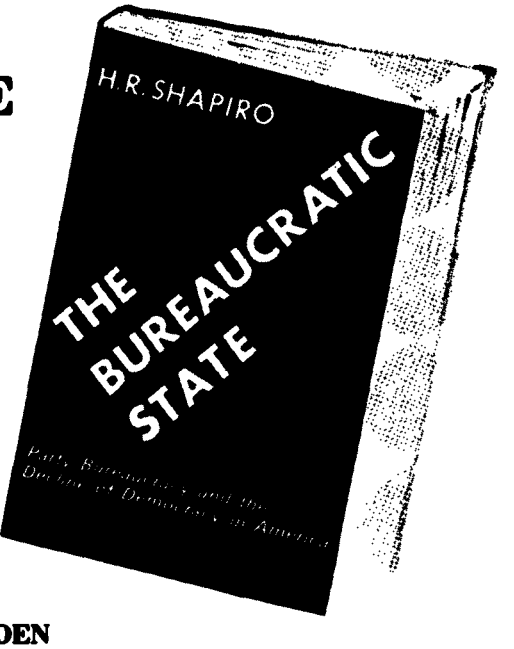
"The Most Important Work On American Politics Since Tocqueville's 'Democracy In America'"*

THE BUREAUCRATIC STATE
by H.R. Shapiro



Some Comments on the Work of H.R. Shapiro

HANNAH ARENDT
The work of H.R. Shapiro goes back to the very foundations of the American Republic. It offers a new approach to political matters which is free of all ideological and party cliches. His discussion and analysis of the daily affairs of public concern has consistently been on a very high level of insight, intelligence, and plain common sense. H.R. Shapiro's work should be read by every independent citizen.

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No one who wishes to keep his mind clear can even read a hundredth of the pages of printed paper that assail him daily. But in spite of my reluctance to receive another periodical I found myself pausing over the very first number of (H.R. Shapiro's) **The Public Life.** I approve its ... fresh approach to matters of public concern now buried under both reactionary and revolutionary cliches.

DWIGHT MACDONALD
(Education and the Republic is) an extraordinary article. I agree with H.R. Shapiro's concept of Republican education and I admire the learning with which he has made his cameleopard come alive - and unfabulous. It's good to have such sensible (educational) proposals backed up by so detailed a grasp of American history and education theory, from Jefferson to Arendt.

GEORGE P. ELLIOT
H.R. Shapiro's essay on American education today (Education and the Republic,) is the best critique of its ills and the origins of those ills that I have read. Moreover, the essay does not leave the reader hopeless, for he suggests a remedy to those ills which involves us all.

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ousness in foreign affairs was overwhelmingly evident; and even in domestic affairs, the administration's policy initiatives were eclectic but not unconsidered. As for irony, some of the humor Safire reports is a little lame—Spiro Agnew laughing to the point of tears at Bob Hope's dirty jokes—but Garment's observation that "Stonewalling doth not misprision make" isn't bad at all.

Safire's White House was also full of pathologies, large and small. Yet a good number of them are depressingly familiar to students of the modern American Presidency. There was indeed a court politics—Haldeman versus Rose Mary Woods, Haldeman versus Charles Colson, Kissinger versus almost everyone. There came to be a *prima facie* assumption that the motives of bureaucrats were at worst evil and at best nonexistent. There was the mistrust of the press and the growing penchant for secrecy, as it became clear how those on the outside who called for an "open administration" would actually reward one. There was the pervasive interest in the administration's place in history, a place that seemed all the more important because Nixon's place among his contemporaries was so unsatisfying. There was the denigration of political party as a vehicle for governing. And more generally, there was the practice of what Josiah Lee Auspitz has called "strategic politics," of treating one's political environment merely as something to be manipulated in behalf of one's goals rather than as the locus of legitimate interests that have a right to be represented. At one point, Safire summarizes the principles that governed Nixon's policy decisions:

> 1) When circumstances change, change your policy.
> 2) When the moment comes to jump—leapfrog over the position immediately ahead.
> 3) Resolve impasses on narrow issues by raising the level to a comprehensive approach so that dickering can take place along a broad front.
> 4) Never apologize or look back.

Such habits of policy-making, as well as many of the principles governing the Nixon political calculations, are those of the "strategic" politician; but Nixon was not the first to apply them.

THESE features of the Nixon White House had been a long time coming, and they cast perhaps less light on that particular administration than they do on the conditions of American political leadership in general. But there remains, of course, the central question of why the Nixon White House exaggerated these tendencies to the point of self-destruction; and Safire seems to find the answer—or the nearest he comes to an answer—in the Presidential character and the political circumstances that helped form it.

Nixon, as Safire describes him, showed in his ideas and his actions a powerful desire to avoid and transcend conventional politics. He had been well schooled in the techniques of both the old politics and the new: he knew about doing and calling in favors, about the mechanics of campaigning, about the nature and uses of news media. And he had a deep aversion to all of them—not only to the press but to campaigning and even to the party politics that he was capable of enjoying on isolated occasions. He could analyze all these phenomena shrewdly, but this analysis was singularly impersonal; he was capable of writing campaign memos in which he referred to himself in the third person, and he could dismiss public praise by pointing out that it was praise not of him but of the type of action he just happened to be taking.

Safire's Nixon found his satisfaction in the things that seemed higher than conventional politics—in ideas, in the conduct of foreign affairs, in the judgment of history, in building a "new majority" based on what he saw to be consensual values rather than bloc or party interests. The political arena, by contrast, was for him a field of recurrent defeats at the hands of those who consistently refused him his due. It was a field in which the honest expression of self would result in further unjust wounds, in which the expression of one's better instincts would only provide enemies with dangerous ammunition, in which a kind of loyalty to those who protected one against these dangers was a value to be upheld even at an exceptionally high price. Nixon was singularly drawn to the things he thought higher than practical politics and singularly struck by the low quality of practical politics. If he could be so unforgiving to his opponents in the fray, perhaps it was because he took so little satisfaction from the fray itself.

What Safire describes is a complex personality in many ways at odds with the current requirements for American political leadership. But he speaks of this personality not only as cause but as effect. If Nixon was easily wounded and incapable of making full recovery, it was also true that in his career he had been wounded more often and more severely than anyone else who finally attained the modern American Presidency. As Machiavelli would have it, Nixon's enemies indeed incurred responsibility for the behavior of his Presidency when they committed the blunder of injuring such a man so deeply without killing him altogether.

And what of Safire's own attitude toward what he has seen? It is not one likely to be pleasing to those who think that the main purpose of a Nixon administration memoir is to account for Watergate. Safire talks about Watergate, denounces Watergate, and tells of the fears and hatreds that helped create it; but the effect of these chapters and passages is softened because they are surrounded by masses of other memories, memories of people and events that were pleasant and honorable rather than pathological and corrupt. The episodic character of many political memoirs is testimony to nothing other than the inherent limitations of their authors and the genre, but in this case the form serves an advocatory function: it suggests that Nixon and his administration cannot be judged simply and in light only of their worst acts.

One can of course respond to this suggestion by concluding that it is a deliberate distortion. Safire was after all a Nixon partisan, and he confesses that he was fully

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enough beguiled by his White House prerogatives. Or one can conclude that Safire's distortion, though real, is not deliberate: his position limited what he knew; as a writer he took too seriously the sense of high purpose that the administration's speeches sometimes expressed; and he was not only a significant repository of the decency that existed in the White House but perhaps misinterpreted others' motives in light of his own. Or, finally, one can conclude that Safire is right—that in thinking about Nixon's administration one is obliged to take into account not only Watergate but things unconnected and contradictory to it. Under ordinary circumstances, this minimal assertion might not sound much like partisan advocacy on Safire's part. In the case of Richard Nixon, its acceptance would already be a kind of partisan victory.

Treblinka

INTO THAT DARKNESS: FROM MERCY KILLING TO MASS MURDER. By GITTA SERENY. *McGraw-Hill. 308 pp. $9.95.*

Reviewed by DOROTHY RABINOWITZ

IN 1970, the Düsseldorf court sentenced Franz Stangl to life imprisonment for his role as commandant of Treblinka where, it was estimated, a total of 900,000 Jews had been murdered in World War II, virtually half of them during Stangl's tenure. Nor had Stangl's earlier career been an innocuous one. An Austrian police chief, he had advanced by 1940 to the position of superintendent at one of the Nazi "institutes" which carried out the government-ordered murder of the mentally ill, the retarded, and others whose continued existence represented a blight on Aryan racial purity. After a six-month spell as commandant of Sobibor, an extermination camp in the Lublin district where, from the beginning of its operations in early 1942 to the fall of 1943, a quarter of a million Jews were killed, Stangl took charge of

DOROTHY RABINOWITZ, *a regular contributor, is the author of* The Other Jews *and co-author of* Home Life.

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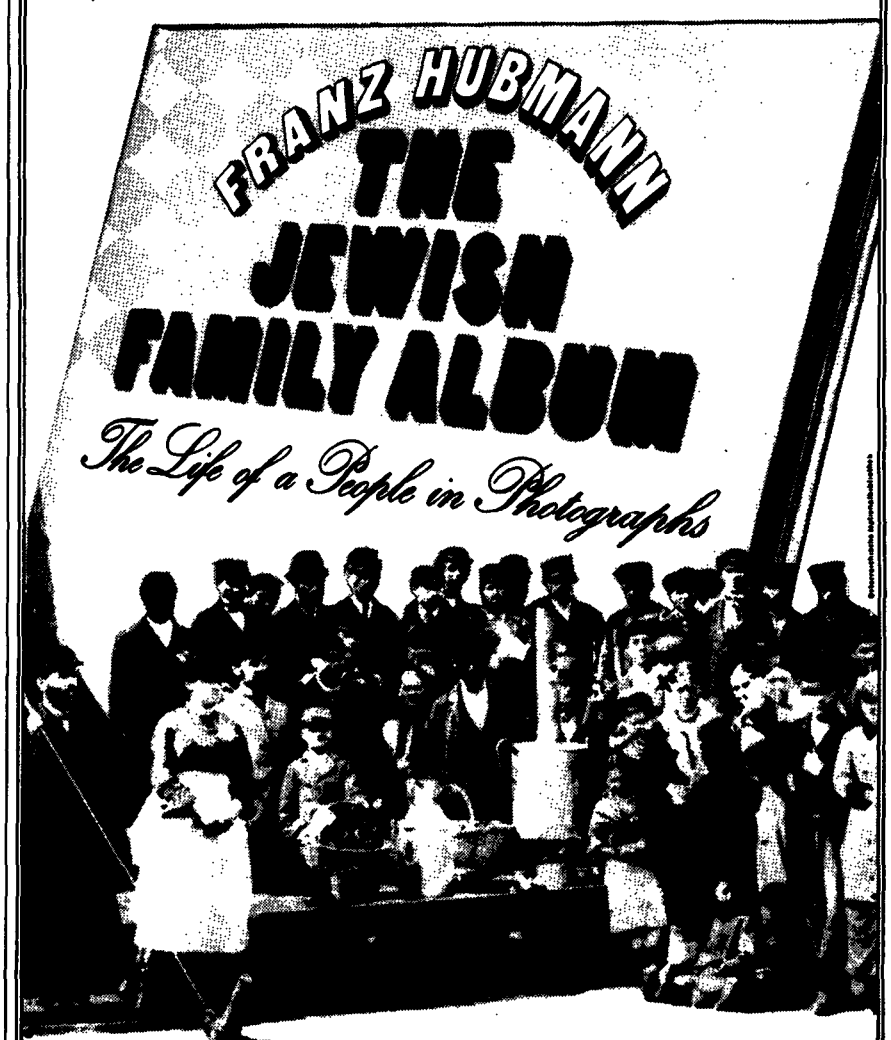

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Treblinka, which was then in urgent need of his services. By September 1942 the regular arrival of great masses of Polish Jews had caused the extermination machinery to fall behind schedule, creating confusion beyond measure. When Stangl took command, conditions were such that the corpses of dead Jews littered the entrance to the camp, while whole trains full of men, women, and children sat on the tracks for days at a time before those still alive could be unloaded and taken to the gas chamber.

It was to this chaos that Stangl brought order: he speeded up the killings and saw to it that corpses no longer littered the station and that the clothes and goods of the Jews were properly disposed of instead of being allowed to lie hip-deep on the ground. In addition, around Christmas of 1942 he ordered the construction of a fake clock at the Treblinka railway station, the installation of ticket windows where no tickets were sold, and the painting of signs that said "To Warsaw" and "To Bialystok" —train connections that did not exist—in order to ensure that arriving Jews would believe they were at a regular transit station, where nothing unusual was going on, and thus go peacefully from the train to the ramps that led straight to the gas chambers.

After the war ended, Stangl got out of Europe through the good offices of Bishop Hudal of Rome, one of a number of highly placed Catholic clergymen who devoted their energies to the task of providing escaping SS men with money, false identification papers, and contacts. The Vatican escape route took Stangl and his family to Syria, where they lived quite satisfactorily among other escaped SS men until a morally disquieting event occurred. The Police President of Damascus, who lived with his harem in uncomfortably close proximity to the Stangls, had begun to take too close an interest in their fourteen-year-old daughter. It was enough to make the Stangls pack up and leave for Brazil, which they did with no difficulty, and where they again lived quite well—these, Mrs. Stangl says, were the best years of all for them. Then, in 1967, traced to Brazil by Simon Wiesenthal, Stangl was arrested and extradited to Germany. He was tried and sentenced to life imprisonment, and a year later, while awaiting the outcome of an appeal, he died in prison of a heart attack (his second).

Between the time of his sentencing and his death Stangl was interviewed at considerable length by Gitta Sereny, a London-based journalist whose articles on the Stangl trial first appeared in the *Daily Telegraph Magazine* in 1967. The result of the prison interviews is a work intended to "penetrate the personality of a man who had been intimately involved with the most total evil our age had produced." It was important to her, Miss Sereny further observes, "to assess the circumstances which led up to his involvement for once not from our point of view but from *his*." It is entirely possible that Miss Sereny is unaware, for instance, of the appalling wealth of material on the circumstances that led to Adolf Eichmann's career as told from his point of view during the 1961 Eichmann trial, or the autobiography of Rudolf Hoess, commandant of Auschwitz, but the "for once" is worth remarking, for it sounds the first note of an ingenuousness that informs this work from beginning to end.

To get at the roots of Stangl's involvement and to penetrate his personality, Miss Sereny interviewed a great number of people, yet despite all the conversation recorded in this book not much light is provided either on Stangl's character or on that of anyone else. Miss Sereny contends that those she interviewed sacrificed their peace of mind and told their stories with extraordinary honesty, a belief difficult to sustain in the face of the evidence here presented. The fact is that people who were once a part of history often consider the interview a boon, a means of reemergence from the anonymity of ordinary life, a means of psychic revitalization. And it is up to the interviewer to resist the blandishments of his subjects if he wishes to get beyond the inevitably self-serving version of history they present him with. Miss Sereny, as she notes in her preface, "approached the research for this book with determination to question but not to hurt"—a commendable if not wholly advisable state of mind, given her subject. In fact she enters into a benevolent partnership with everyone she interviews, and all but distributes awards for cooperation:

> Renate, the Stangl's middle daughter . . . is slim, blond, with a delicate and vulnerable face that looked, when I met her, much younger than her thirty-three years.
>
> Theresa Stangl [Franz Stangl's wife] is small, blond, and attractive. She was sixty-four years old when I visited her in Brazil but looked far younger.

Miss Sereny carries on at some length in this fashion each time a new interviewee is introduced. There are a number of questions one might raise with regard to this propensity, but the one that matters is whether this is a proper critical disposition in which to undertake an inquiry into the nature of any man, much less that of the commandant of Treblinka.

Miss Sereny does try valiantly to break into the pattern of abstraction and denial which characterizes Stangl's attitude toward his victims. Not an unsentimental man, Stangl could sometimes recall a friendly exchange with this or that Jew whom he remembered from Treblinka. "But what happened to him?" his interviewer would ask, hoping by means of suggestion to make Stangl say something that showed he could connect with the facts. "Did you ever see him again?" Invariably, Stangl would reply to the first question that he did not know what happened to the person, which was a lie, and then to the second, "No, I never saw him again," which was, of course, the truth. Stangl never failed to sound faintly puzzled in making these replies, if Miss Sereny's recording of them is accurate: and not surprisingly, for whatever his interviewer meant to accomplish by them, such questions must have been a puzzle to one whose normal frame of mind with regard to his work was no different, in 1970, from what it had been in 1942. Killing Jews had been Stangl's work; that

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was what the Jews were sent to Treblinka *for*. To ask him to "relate to" the fate of a particular Jew was to ask him to make a special to-do about something that had been a most ordinary—a natural—fact: it was the business of the Jews of Treblinka to die.

Toward the end of the book, Miss Sereny records the details of her last visit to Stangl, during which she brought him some homemade soup. They had gotten to be friends, she observes, and since this was to be her last visit, she pressed Stangl to come to some conclusion about himself and the things he had done: for at his trial, and thereafter, he had always maintained that his conscience was clear, that God alone knew the sort of man he was. Finally, at this last interview, Stangl's body sagged as he pronounced some words on the question of his guilt: "My guilt is that I am still here. . . . That is my guilt." Some nineteen hours later, he was dead, a circumstance Miss Sereny ascribes to her success in making Stangl face up to the truth. "I think he died because he had finally, however briefly, faced himself and told the truth; it was a monumental effort to reach that fleeting moment when he became the man he should have been."

IN FACT, no one who reads this final scene can miss the transparent falsity of Stangl's admission of guilt, or the reason behind it. Not unaware of what was expected of him—the man who salvaged Treblinka from chaos and administered it at peak efficiency was no fool—he found it in himself to acquiesce wearily and say a few words about guilt as a final blandishment to his interviewer. A man who for twenty-five years was capable of enjoying all the benefits of freedom, prosperity, and a happy family life after the deeds he accomplished at Treblinka would not be so easily undone by the utterance of a few words.

In offering extensive testimony of Stangl's family life and domestic conditions—his daughters and his wife loved him dearly—Miss Sereny no doubt intends to suggest of Stangl that this too was a man, involved though he had been in an evil so great. That is the *raison d'être* of this work, and it is a paltry thing beside the fact that in the course of his career, Stangl presided over the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children, and did so with all the skill and energy at his command. Five thousand Jews arrived at a time at the Treblinka station; they had been kept in sealed trains for days without air, food, water, or sanitary facilities. When they got inside the camps, dazed and exhausted, SS men fell on them with their whips and ran them into the gas chambers. Overseer and chief authority on the scene was Franz Stangl, striding about and dressed for the day's work, as always, in an impeccable white riding habit. It is, indeed, necessary to learn what makes the character of men like Stangl, but it will not be from their mouths, or the mouths of their wives, children, or sisters-in-law, or from interviewers who have no wish to hurt anyone, that we will learn it.

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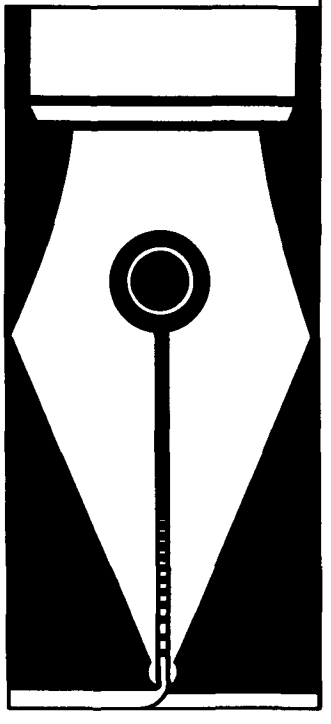

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Momentary Opinions

DISCRIMINATIONS: ESSAYS AND AFTERTHOUGHTS—1938-1974. By DWIGHT MACDONALD. *Grossman. 480 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by LOUIS BERG

Discriminations is a ragtag collection of Dwight Macdonald's past feuilletons, essays, book reviews, and polemical writings dating from 1938—fugitive pieces that have eluded previous and better collections. Some effort has been made, as the subtitle indicates, to update judgments that time has destroyed, but not, alas, to amend them. What the collection chiefly demonstrates once again is that Macdonald, when he is not writing about politics, can be a keen and occasionally brilliant observer of the cultural scene. Unfortunately, however, he has chosen over the years to write mainly about politics, a subject on which he has by now simply forfeited any claims to credibility.

For proof of how consistently Macdonald has erred in his political judgments, one need only note how often those judgments have changed. Over the years Macdonald has been successively a Communist, a Trotskyist, a free-wheeling radical, a pacifist, and a liberal of sorts, all of which positions he has ardently championed, and as ardently disavowed. By his own admission, he has also misjudged every single President and every single candidate for the Presidency he ever supported. To be sure, Macdonald has not been alone in his wanderings along the tortuous road of left-wing politics; but others (including the present writer) who have made the same journey have at least learned from the experience to be somewhat less asseverating in our present political views.

Not so Macdonald, who whatever his inner doubts, asserts his present position with the same undiminished cockiness he has brought to all his earlier ones, though what precisely that position is, is open to conjecture. As near as one may gather, he seems to be a kind of vestigial Marxist who has no faith in the working class, an upholder of democracy who deplores the masses and does not believe in the ballot (he quotes with approval Proudhon's tirade against voting), and an anarchist who supports the capitalist free market (as if such an animal ever existed) on grounds that it is anarchistic. He thinks the American Constitution is one of the noblest works of man (subject to a few amendments of his own) but would exchange it for the British Parliamentary system, which in turn he would supplant with his own brand of anarchism.

This last is a curious hybrid of his own devising, one part Bakunin, three parts pure Macdonald. His Free Society would be achieved by voluntary groups acting independently in pursuit of particular aims and without central government. Such groups as the PTA and, yes, garden clubs have shown the way; trade unions get no mention. To do him justice, Macdonald does give large credit to CORE whose sit-ins achieved integration in his view, but there is not a word in all of this about the role of the black vote, which even Southern politicians woo, and he seems to deplore federal enforcement (indeed, he considers the use of troops in Little Rock a national disaster). Nor does he tell us what is to be done if and when the interests of his special groups happen to clash.

SO MUCH for his political views, about which the best that can be said is that he has wielded a vigorous pen on behalf of his opinions of the moment. Like the warhorse in the Book of Job, "he smelleth battle *from afar*"; he has been known, that is to say, to arrive on the scene when the tide of battle has receded, and to cry "ha, ha!" to the sound of trumpets that no one else can hear.

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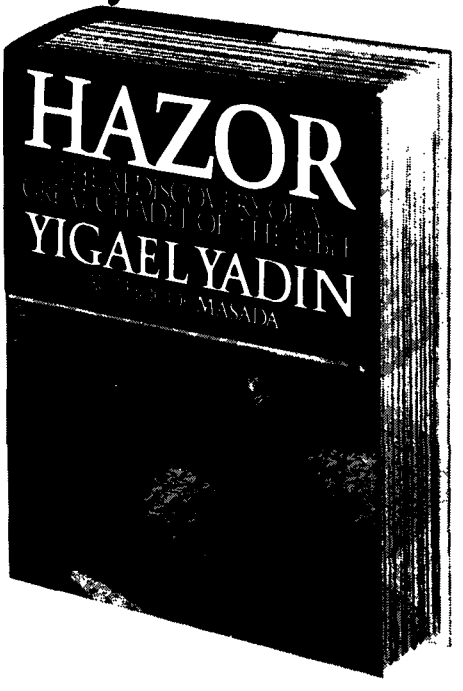

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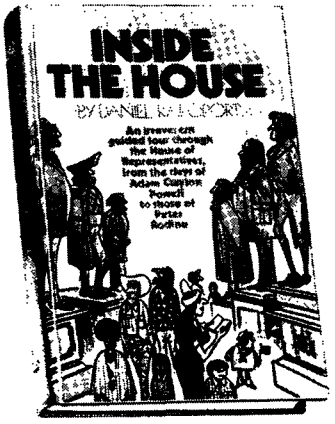

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Where he may be taken seriously is as a critic of literature and related intellectual matters, though even here he sometimes shows a tendency to cut deeper than the operation warrants. Thus, his dissection of James Gould Cozzens's *By Love Possessed* (which was originally published in COMMENTARY) was justly praised in its time for deflating a vastly overinflated literary reputation. It is one thing, however, to point out that the king's fine clothes are a sham, quite another not to allow the exposed monarch his own decent suit of underwear. And nearly twenty years later, Macdonald is still referring to the piece in an "Afterthought," which sounds uncomfortably like gloating over a corpse. Similarly, his celebrated defense of Hannah Arendt against the "Jewish establishment" in the Eichmann trial controversy seemed animated less by the need to defend Hannah Arendt than by the desire to go her one better in attacking the Jewish leadership. On the other hand, Macdonald's piece on Henry Luce in the present collection is genuinely brilliant, as is the beautiful job he does on what he calls the "para-journalism" of Tom Wolfe and numerous imitators. Reading such pieces, one is confirmed in the view that Macdonald would do well to avoid politics and stick to what he does best.

From the Quarterdeck

THE EUROPEAN DISCOVERY OF AMERICA: THE NORTHERN VOYAGES. By SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON. *Oxford. 712 pp. $17.50.*

THE EUROPEAN DISCOVERY OF AMERICA: THE SOUTHERN VOYAGES. By SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON. *Oxford. 756 pp. $17.50.*

Reviewed by B. BRUCE-BRIGGS

THE community of historians has long been ambivalent toward Samuel Eliot Morison. His scholarly credentials are impeccable—Harvard, Harvard Ph.D., graduate study at the Sorbonne, forty years a professor at Harvard, and lectureships at Oxford; he has also gleaned every award imaginable, including two Bancroft Prizes; and his writings are unexceptionable in their learning and rarely challenged even in details. Still, there has been a certain hesitancy in accepting him. His books are rarely discussed or cited in journals or in other works. Recent reviews of the second volume of his *The European Discovery of America* were raves, yet a certain patronizing tone can be detected in many of them. If one were to take a poll of scholars or even of educated Americans, I suspect Morison would win a plurality as America's leading historian, but he is not taken entirely seriously by his own colleagues.

ONE problem is that he is so prolific. He has at least forty volumes to his credit, a constant affront to historians who all too frequently write one book to get tenure and spend twenty years on the next. Another problem is his style—lucid, easygoing, almost conversational, completely lacking in the Teutonic ponderousness that in some circles is considered scholarly writing. He prefers to publish through trade rather than university publishers; his works are distributed by book clubs; and he has made a lot of money through his writing. Worse, he cheerfully disregards the current concerns of historians, sticking to straight narrative in the tradition of Parkman, Prescott, and the younger Henry Adams, with scarcely a hint of "analysis," eschewing statistics, psychology, periodization, grand generalities, and ruminations on the meaning of history and historical events that are the central concerns of most contemporary historians.

Considering the primitive support given the typical scholar, Morison's *modus operandi* must be infuriating. He is well connected. His acknowledgments read like a Hall of Fame. When he visits an archive he does not grub about with clerks—the director sees to it that he is led right to the appropriate documents. When he wishes to examine a historical site, a friend

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B. BRUCE-BRIGGS *writes on urban affairs and military history and is the author of the forthcoming* Cities on the Way Out *(Basic Books).*

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provides an airplane or boat. In operations in New England waters, Morison has used his own yacht. To trace the track of Columbus he organized a flotilla to cross the Atlantic. When Morison has need of a photograph of Cape Horn, he obtains one taken from the last American vessel to round it under sail, courtesy of the captain. When Morison goes to the Far East, the Chief of Naval Operations calls a Smithsonian scholar to active duty as his interpreter, and the Commander of the Far East Air Fleet puts an aircraft at his disposal to visit Okinawa and Chichi Jima. Worst of all, when Morison determines that the U.S. Navy needs a historian, he personally canvasses the Commander-in-Chief (another Navy buff), obtains a direct commission, records World War II from wardrooms and flag bridges, and retires as a Rear Admiral. Anyone can be a professor: but among renowned historians only Thucydides, Mahan, and Morison have been admirals.

IF I am right in believing that contemporary historians are a little leery of Morison, they probably are justified. He is not truly one of them—not fully committed to the "discipline" or to the university community. Rather, he is a Boston gentleman who writes history because it pleases him to do so, and being a gentleman he does so with competence, grace, insouciance, and a little flair. Although his father had the bad taste to be born in Baltimore, Morison's background is otherwise beyond complaint. His mother was an Eliot and her mother an Otis. He attended the right schools, and belongs to the right clubs. He owns the house in which he was born and summers in Maine. Of course, he is an Episcopalian.

Moreover, he is a Brahmin gentleman of the last century and retains intact the values of his youth. Morison is a product of the WASP renaissance of the turn of the century when the scions of old Yankee stock saw themselves as a distinct ethnic group possessing certain desirable traditions and values being threatened by the teeming immigrant masses. They determined to shape themselves up—through

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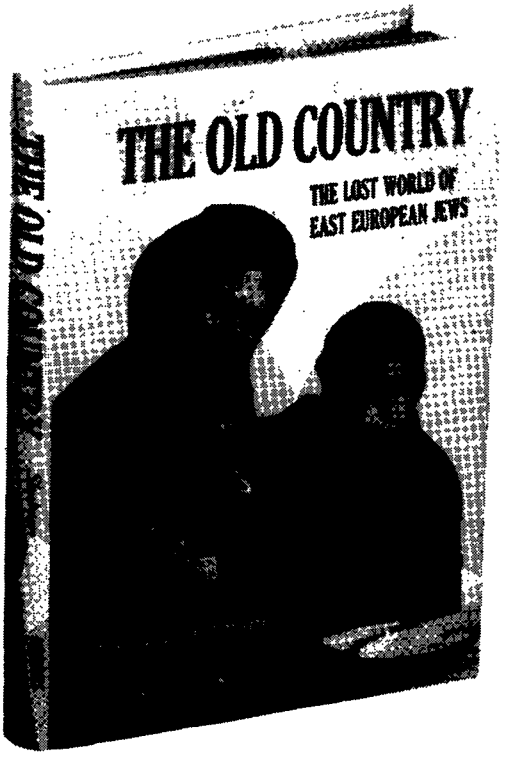

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prep schools, hereditary societies, the Episcopal Church; to shape up the whole society—through philanthropy, social work, Progressivism; and eventually to shape up the entire world—through boy scouts, militarism, navalism. While Morison was a student the Great White Fleet sailed around the world, the Pure Food and Drugs Act was enacted, and W.E.B. Du Bois was expelled from the Sons of the American Revolution on account of his color.

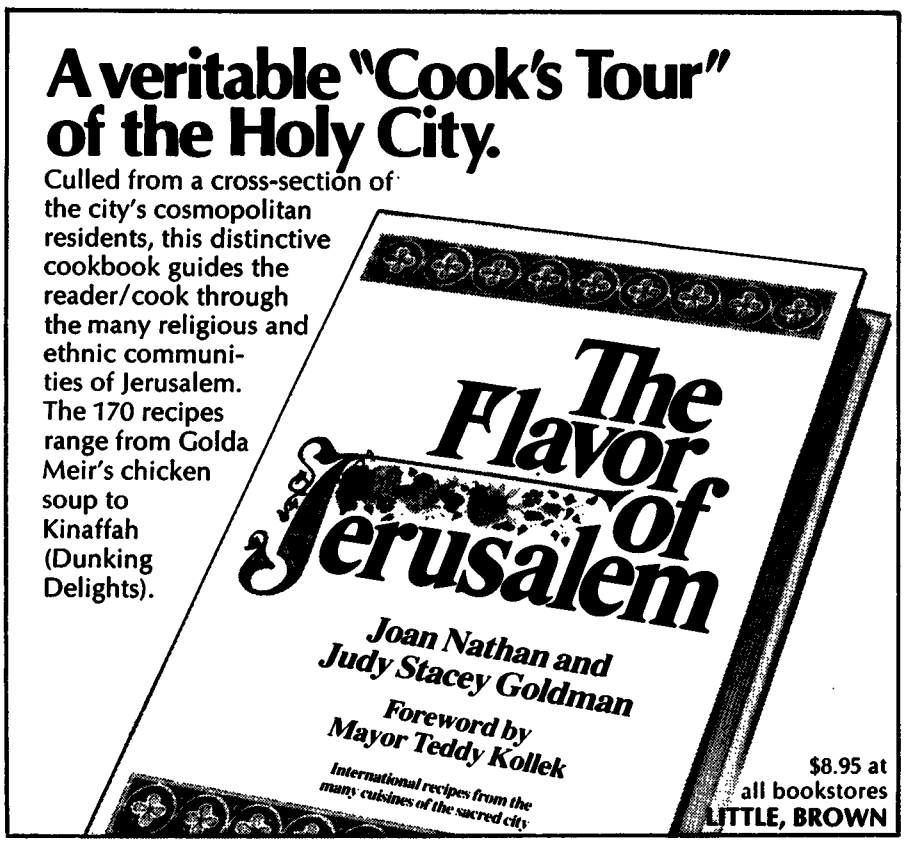
None of what we now think of as unattractive aspects of the period survives in Morison—not a hint of jingoism or racism. But the rest remains uncorrupted by the 20th century—the patriotism and public spirit, and especially the respect for skill, courage, endurance, duty, and honesty—all lately condemned as "bourgeois" but in fact the common coin of decent men in all times, places, stations, and conditions. To anyone accustomed to 20th-century values and jargon, Morison appears old-fashioned and quaint, a writer suitable for those who prefer C. S. Forester to E. M. Forster.

The European Discovery of America is classic Morison. The books are permeated with the love of the sea and seamen. The historian's attention, focused on the discoveries, scarcely deviates by one degree. As much as possible, the world is viewed through the eyes of the period—for example, although the books largely concern the 16th century, I did not notice the historians' terms "Renaissance" or "Reformation." The text is unlittered by superior numbers—most asides and annotations and all references are relegated to brief bibliographic essays at the end of chapters, as if only of interest to scholars. Actually these elegant essays are also worthy of attention for their own sake.

The books themselves are nicely made and copiously illustrated, using a process that permits the plate to be put on the same page as the text. Morison is always careful with maps, and his use of them should be a model. These volumes are expensive, but well worth the money.

Much of the story is familiar to readers of the popularizations of John Fiske's *Discovery of America* that used to be a standard of grammar-school textbooks—how a few brave men in tiny ships found a whole New World. The focus is on America, with little continuity on the European end; the narrative necessarily lacks unity, being a series of anecdotes of individual voyoyages conducted as speculative ventures by monarchs, courtiers, and merchants (where possible Morison tells us what profit was made). Some are thin because the sources are sparse or because little happened, but when Morison has hard data with which to spin out a good yarn, he makes quite a run of it.

The books are rich with vibrant characters—saints, heroes, poltroons—men who possessed incredible courage and unbelievable powers of endurance, and were capable of the vilest treachery. The costs were enormous: ships would return with a fraction of their complement; whole fleets disappeared without a trace; many mariners ended their voyage in cooking pots (there are no "noble savages" in Morison—the aborigines gave as good as they suffered). The discoverers were as ruthless with each other as they were with the natives—many careers were terminated by the noose, the axe, or, a practice peculiar to that time, marooning. Upon their return home, many could not collect their pay from the corrupt governments of the time, and some found themselves in prison. It is difficult for us today to comprehend the almost total lack of any sort of public or corporate spirit in the late Middle Ages. It was a Hobbesian world—the captains ruled by fear and force of will. Only the strongest characters could keep a fleet together and only the most skilled could take it out into unchartered waters and back safely. (This is another part of Morison that seems unfashionable today: his respect for leadership. In a Morison history, as on a ship, the captain alone is responsible—not always right, to be sure, but always the one with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the final word. Morison's is the view from the quarterdeck.)

Of the two volumes, *The Northern Voyages* seems to me the more rewarding. It is peculiar that the average North American knows less about the discovery of this continent than about that of South America; most of us have more to learn about Cabot, Verrazano, Frobisher, and Davis than about Columbus, Vespucci, Magellan, and Drake. *The Northern Voyages* also has the chapter on navigation, ship handling, naval architecture, and nautical terminology necessary to the lay reader. Of great interest also is the solution to the Vinland riddle, and it is a delight to read Morison's genial savaging of enthusiasts of other pre-Columbian "discoverers" (although it might be said that the Admiral is a bit too cavalier in his rejection of some of these shadowy claims).

The second volume is not without considerable virtues. Although Morison fans will find that a quarter of *The Southern Voyages* is a slight retouching of his *Christopher Columbus: Mariner* (1955), in Magellan and Drake the Admiral has heroes to match his greatest subject. It is a pleasure to follow the historian's judicious weighing of the evidence to the conclusion that Americus Vespucci was a confidence man. Morison delights in hoaxes and frauds. He gives the back of his hand to the notion that Columbus was a Jew, exposes California's "Drake Plate," and gleefully discusses historians who have plagiarized his previous work.

In reading a book by a very old man, one is sensitive to signs of declining talent or at least of indulgence of idiosyncracies that so often blight the work of the much-acclaimed. It might be said that *The Southern Voyages* has altogether too many photographs of Morison cronies. The Admiral's prose seems to get juicier with each succeeding book, but is still far from overripe. Morison is still in his prime. But *The Southern Voyages* sends sad news—the recent death, noted in the dedication, of Mrs. Morison. The Admiral has determined to write no more histories. We may hope he will reconsider, for we'll not see his kind again.

Art & the Masses

POPULAR CULTURE AND HIGH CULTURE: AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF TASTE. By HERBERT J. GANS. *Basic Books. 179 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by DAVID THORBURN

THERE are residual virtues in this slender, imperfect book that even the most critical reader cannot fairly ignore. Professor Gans has tried to write an egalitarian cultural manifesto, an argument for what he calls "aesthetic pluralism," and although his good will toward popular culture is far more ambiguous than he realizes, his book does introduce a useful balance into current discussions of popular art.

The book is divided into three parts: a chapter examining and strongly questioning "the critique of mass culture" as formulated by such writers as Bernard Rosenberg, Dwight Macdonald, Ernest van den Haag, and others; then a section somewhat mistitled "A Comparative Analysis of High and Popular Culture," which offers a more intricate and, according to Gans, a more neutral and accurate description of American cultural divisions than what is suggested by such prejudicial terms as highbrow, middlebrow, and lowbrow; finally, a "practical" chapter which translates the theoretical principles discovered earlier into recommendations for public policy.

Gans reminds us sharply, and I think persuasively, that for most people aesthetic experience belongs in the category of leisure activity, and, therefore, that high culture's impulse to confer special dignity on cultural fare may well establish standards or expectations that are inappropriate for a great deal of popular art. Gans passes too quickly from this notion to an account of popular culture that unnecessarily trivializes it, but his primary claim retains its value even when he himself goes astray.

DAVID THORBURN *teaches English at Yale and is the author of* Conrad's Romanticism.

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For it is possible to see in this unromantic view of art's peripheral significance for most people the basis for a theory of popular culture that acknowledges the singularity and the often admirable modesty of its claims upon us. Such an acknowledgment need not mean that popular culture is necessarily or inevitably inferior to high culture, just as a sonnet is not necessarily inferior to an epic poem or a novel. But it does mean that a satisfactory account of popular culture will require a kind of flexibility and realism that is hard to find not only among the elitist critics of mass culture with whom Gans wishes to take issue, but also among that rapidly increasing fellowship of writers who are committed to the defense and vindication of popular art.

These latter are far more sophisticated than Gans in aesthetic ways but their characteristic discourse is weakest where he is strongest: in the simple, even the utilitarian, common sense with which he regards various manifestations of popular culture. American films, popular songs, television dramas are items of use for Gans, commodities designed to offer immediate satisfactions to a mass audience. Gans seriously underestimates the complexity of those primary satisfactions and the art that engenders them. But his unwillingness to impose alien standards on popular art seems to me helpful, for it exposes a weakness or inadequacy that is endemic to most current writing favorable to popular culture: that sharp disjunction one repeatedly senses in such writing between the grandiose terms of the critical argument and the relative smallness or modesty of the "text" itself. A crystallizing if extreme instance of this might be Leslie Fiedler's recent, and typically strident, "discovery" that *Gone With the Wind* is the great American novel. The film cultists and their enlarging audience of fellow-travelers, continually insisting on the Sophoclean complexity of (say) Bogart's movies, are the most visible of these enthusiasts. But their actual fraternity is much larger and includes many commentators on popular music, of course, and also those somewhat more academic critics, sometimes influenced or strangely nourished by ill-digested gobbets of structuralism, who have begun to pay court to such forms of popular narrative as the detective story and science fiction. Even the more suggestive and serious writing on popular culture—for example, Richard Poirier's chapter on the Beatles in *The Performing Self*—seems often to be burdened by a kind of intellectual straining, by ponderous, unpersuasive analogies with traditional art forms, in general by a critical tone deeply at odds with its material. If Gans's sensible attitude toward popular art tempers subsequent discourse on this topic, if his example stimulates a more tactful criticism whose theoretical methods and practical arguments are better fitted to their subject, he will have done a service.

I FIND it hard to conceive that he can help us much in other ways, however; for *Popular Culture and High Culture* is deeply divided against itself and offers sadly decisive evidence for Gans's failure to separate himself from the elitist assumptions he sets out to criticize.

Thoroughly naive about the nature of aesthetic experience, Gans recommends a policy of "subcultural programming" whereby teams of researchers would systematically inquire into the aesthetic wants of various "taste publics" whose preferences would then be translated into art by "creators" encouraged by government subsidy and other means to satisfy a diversity of cultural appetites currently being starved under the joint tyranny of high culture and the mass media. This fantastic proposal, wherein sociological questionnaires neatly displace the unpredictable Muses, scarcely strengthens one's faith in Gans's gift for cultural analysis. But his reasons for offering such a scheme are more unsettling still, and far more damaging to his status as a champion of popular culture.

Subcultural programming is advisable, Gans strangely argues in his third and culminating chapter, *not* because the minority cultures thus wondrously brought to life would be intrinsically valuable or interesting or rich, but only because "cultural choices" are rigidly determined by one's social class and, especially, by the level of one's education. It simply isn't fair, it isn't "democratic," to expect the lower social orders to choose the same cultural fare as the college-educated. "Elementary school graduates who have educated themselves to choose high culture" are "heroic," Gans tells us, but entirely "atypical." Indeed, so narrow and specialized are the products of high culture that even most college graduates do not have access to them, although this deprivation at least protects them from having to attend, say, the opera, a cultural obligation that Gans would seem likely to impose on Harvard men:

> The choice of high culture typically requires at least a high quality college education with strong emphasis on the humanities. Such a choice could therefore not be expected from a high school graduate, or for that matter from a college graduate untrained in the arts. . . . Both the high school graduate and the college graduate should be expected to choose [cultural] content that fits their educational levels and aesthetic standards; and both should be judged negatively only if they consistently choose below these levels. A college graduate should not read mainly detective stories, nor should a high school graduate devote himself or herself to comic books. And while both deserve praise if they read Proust, they should not be expected to do so, at least not in evaluations that result in public policy.

The normative tone Gans lapses into here is uncharacteristic of the book as a whole and for precisely that reason is deeply revealing. In no other place does Gans acknowledge quite so openly how powerfully qualified is his repeated insistence that "all people have the right to the culture they prefer"; and in no other place does he so clearly dispel for the reader (if not for himself) the illusion that he is untouched by the "disdain for ordinary people and their aesthetic capacities" that he perceives in much of high culture's antagonism to popular culture.

Gans's inability to defend mass

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A sixth-generation Israeli whose family emigrated from Portugal to Algiers in 1490 and then to Palestine in 1838, Mrs. Rotholz (nee Chélouche) is steeped in the culture and tradition of Israel, both ancient and modern. She studied in Haifa and Beirut, as well as at the Pratt Graphic Art Center and Brooklyn Museum Art School in the United States.

Her work has been exhibited in Israel, the United States, and Europe—in private collections and in such major institutions as the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Rose Art Museum of Brandeis University, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

In her search for a stone-textured effect in her etchings, Mrs. Rotholz devised and created an entirely new technique, "Tuilegraphy." Taken from the French word for tile, the term refers to the tile she uses for engraving plates, a medium that enables her to create a high-relief, sculptural art form. These unique three-dimensional etchings have been described by art critic Bruce Glaser as "a fascinating, modern evocation of ancient Near-Eastern ceremonial representations, Mrs. Rotholz's work is characteristic of the art of Biblical times."

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culture in other than relative terms cripples his whole enterprise, intermittently transforming his "respect" for working-class and ethnic cultures into a form of liberal tolerance hard to distinguish from mere insult. His opening chapter, a strong exposé of the class-oriented prejudices that underlie elitist complaints against the harmful and narcotic effects of popular culture, offers solid encouragement for engaging popular art on its own terms and without condescension. But Gans abruptly detours from this promising direction, turning to a highly schematic description of five major and several minor "taste cultures," a description whose largest effect is to reinforce and even to extend the rigidly stratified view of cultural differences promulgated by precisely those critics of mass culture against whom Gans had been contending a few pages earlier.

Gans's unintended but nonetheless enfeebling surrender to assumptions that are incompatible with a true respect for popular culture testifies, I think, to the limitations of a narrowly sociological perspective on complex aesthetic and cultural issues. His book is seriously weakened, for example, by an extremely sketchy sense of history: Elizabethan England and the Renaissance are different eras for Gans, and he appears to believe—what even an amateur's acquaintance with Sophocles or Shakespeare or Cervantes would instantly call into question—that the great art of the past was always created by and for a cultural elite. Again, his argument is badly hurt by its superficial understanding of artistic and especially of literary form, which Gans seems to regard as the enemy of content, as something found in abundance in "subtle" high culture but only minimally present in rough-and-tumble low culture where form is "totally subservient" to "substance." That popular music or films or television dramas might be as allusive and as formally complex in their own ways as serious novels, or that the public's deep familiarity with these art forms might be seen as a genuine kind of literacy, even of aesthetic sophistication—these are possibilities barely hinted at in this disappointing book.

Repeatedly in these pages one hears a strident or defensive tone that must strike one finally as an oblique form of deference to the continuing authority of high culture. Gans is clearly unaware of how unnecessary, even how archaic, such deference has become in the last decade or so, a period whose most salient feature from a cultural standpoint may well turn out to have been the embryonic but unmistakable emergence into respectability—and even into the university curriculum—of various forms of popular culture. It is yet another measure of Gans's enclosure within his own specialty that he imagines himself to be working in isolation, supported in his democratist impulses only by other social scientists. Their empirical research on the mass media does undermine elitist myths about the Pavlovian dangers of popular culture but, like Gans's book itself, can do little to advance our understanding of the true character of popular art.

Before Hitler

WEIMAR: A CULTURAL HISTORY, 1918-1933. By WALTER LAQUEUR. *Putnam. 308 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by GORDON A. CRAIG

IN A rare moment of brutal candor, Adolf Hitler told representatives of the press in November 1938 that his patience was exhausted by the way German intellectuals tended to divide into quarrelling sects. He added, "Unfortunately, one needs them. Otherwise, one fine day, one could—I don't know—wipe them out or something. But unfortunately one needs them."

This was perhaps an inelegant admission of the Fuehrer's own debt to the intellectuals in the days that followed his accession to power in January 1933. While many of Germany's most distinguished scientists and artists had crossed the frontiers at that time in order to escape the brown dictatorship, there had been hordes of others who had rallied to Hitler's standard, and these included such prominent figures as the political theorist Carl Schmitt, who abounded in plausible justifications of the Fuehrer's destruction of the constitution; the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who in his rectoral address at the University of Freiburg acclaimed Hitler as the fate-chosen instrument for the achievement of Germany's purpose in history; and the poet Gottfried Benn, who in a radio talk in 1933 called upon his fellow intellectuals to support the new state. Thanks to these leaders and the many other artists and writers who followed their example, Hitler's regime was given a spurious, but impressive, respectability while it was still struggling to consolidate itself.

The Weimar republic never had the benefit of that kind of support. With distressingly few exceptions, intellectual spokesmen of all shades of opinion were united in their detestation of the constitutional system that had replaced the Wilhelmine monarchy when it collapsed in military defeat and revolution in November 1918. It is, therefore, entirely appropriate that Walter Laqueur should devote almost half of his new cultural history of the Weimar period to analyzing the reasons for this antipathy and to describing some of the forms it took.

It goes without saying that support for the republic could not be expected from Communist intellectuals, who lived in the expectation of another and more successful Spartacus week and meanwhile, in the columns of journals like *Die Linkskurve*, preached the message that the republic was nothing but a disguised form of fascism that would disappear when the working class recognized its true character. This view of the republican regime as a transitional stage in German history was also the stock in trade of those ideologues of the New Right of whom historians like Fritz Stern and Klemens von Klemperer have written—Moeller van den Bruck and Oswald Spengler and the half-baked prophets of

GORDON A. CRAIG *is J. E. Wallace Sterling Professor of Humanities and Chairman of the Department of History at Stanford University. He has written extensively on German history.*

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the June Club and the *Tat* Circle, who believed that the revolution of 1918 had been an abortion that merely perpetuated the flabby liberalism and the debilitating materialism of the past and that German youth must be prepared for the more decisive overturn that would purge society of its ills and usher in the heroic age.

Mr. Laqueur believes that both of these groups facilitated Hitler's conquest of power, the Communists because their muddled belief that republicanism and fascism were synonymous led to the fateful assumption that National Socialism would be no worse and would somehow or other hasten their own victory; the new conservatives because their idealization of violence and their creation of the myth of a Third Reich predisposed the minds of romantic youth to the destruction of the republican order. He is inclined, nevertheless, to the view that their influence was less critical than that of the academic intelligentsia and the left-wing intellectuals.

Those who bewail the violence that has disrupted university life in Germany since 1967 should remember that, in some degree, its origins are to be found in accumulated exasperation over the universities' stubborn resistance to any change in their governance and curriculum. In the early 1960's academic reformers were still trying by peaceful means to win acceptance for policies that republican ministers of culture had failed to effect in the 1920's. At that time the mandarins of the academic establishment had fought bitterly and successfully in defense of their traditional monopoly of university power, and their opposition to democracy in the universities was reflected in their reprobation of democratic politics in the state. The historians, the jurists, and the *Germanisten* were the most stalwart defenders of the old order, although Mr. Laqueur points out that "even among the natural scientists and professors of medicine there were not a few who used every opportunity to attack the 'system.'" Most of these had no practical alternative to the regime they opposed; they were inveterate supporters of a dead past.

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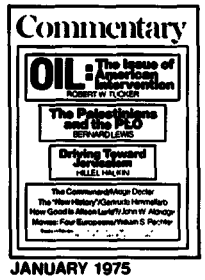

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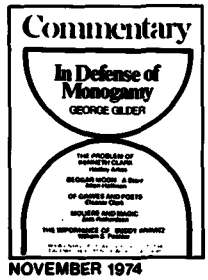

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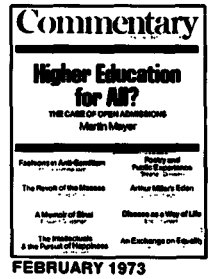

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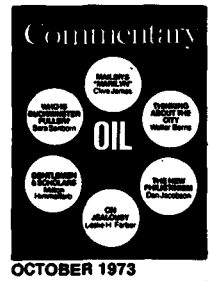

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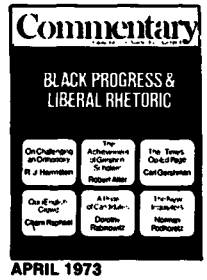

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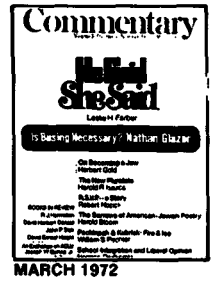

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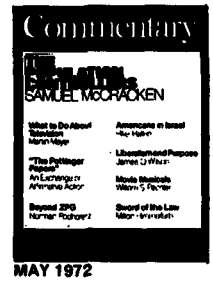

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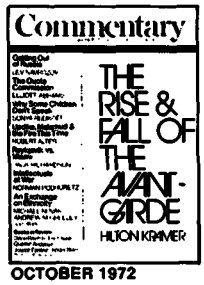

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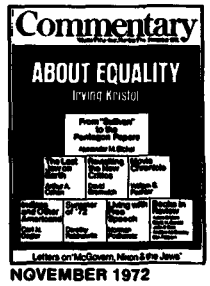

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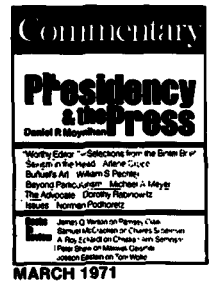

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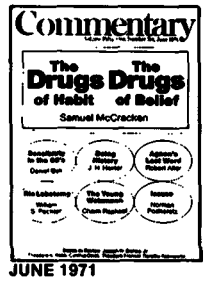

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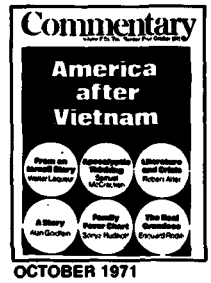

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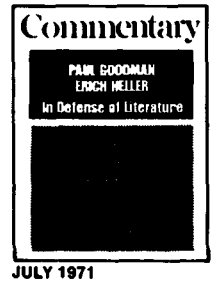

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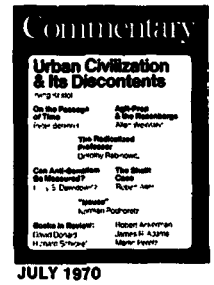

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Their students, while absorbing their contempt for the republic, had no patience with this reactionary nonsense. They turned to National Socialism which, as early as 1929, was the strongest movement in student politics in nineteen of Germany's universities.

It is to the left-wing intellectuals, the large body of radical journalists, writers, artists, professional men, and undomiciled academicians on the fringes of the literary world that Mr. Laqueur pays particular attention. These people rejected the republic, for the most part, because they felt that it had betrayed them by failing to live up to their own unreasonable expectations of it, because it had made compromises in order to survive, because it had not purged the bureaucracy or abolished the Reichswehr, because it had been practical rather than idealistic. Politically, they were homeless because they could not tolerate party discipline. Contemptuous alike of the opportunism of the Social Democratic party and the rigidity of the Communists, they added to the fragmentation of Weimar politics by forming short-lived splinter-groups of their own, conscious of their isolation and compensating for it, Mr. Laqueur argues, by an increasing degree of irresponsibility and extremism. Thus, Kurt Tucholsky, the greatest German satirist since Heine, brought grist to the mills of the Right by broadcasting his conviction that the German spirit was poisoned almost beyond recovery and that "German democracy [was] a façade and a lie."

MR. LAQUEUR does not believe that the Weimar republic failed because of the *trahison des clercs*—there were too many other factors at work to justify any such theory—but he does not doubt that they made a powerful contribution to its woeful lack of prestige or, if you will, of credibility. And he finds it ironical that the left-wing intellectuals in particular should have participated in this process, since the republic, after all, protected ideals that they themselves professed. It stood for the kind of freedom that promoted the flowering of talent and encouraged experimentation. "With all its defects, the Weimar republic was more sympathetic, or at least less antagonistic, to modernism than any other political system of the day." All the preconditions for a cultural revolution existed in the years in which the republic struggled for its life.

The nature of that revolution Mr. Laqueur describes in two very comprehensive chapters on "the rise and decline of the avant-garde" and a highly diverting one called "Berlin *s'amuse*." In the former he describes the principal literary and artistic movements of the period with economy but not at the expense of insight and judgment. His view of Expressionist drama is much like that of the professor in Thomas Mann's "Disorder and Early Sorrow," who sighed over "artists of the modern school, who stand on the stage in strange and . . . utterly affected dancing attitudes and shriek lamentably"; but he is warmer in his treatment of Brecht, and even of Piscator, and his judgment of achievements in the field of poetry and the novel is generous to a fault. "Collectively," he writes, "this was perhaps [German literature's] richest period. It is not easy to think of many novels or poems written during the 1860's, the 1890's, or the 1960's which are worth re-reading; it is not at all difficult to prepare such a list of works published during the 1920's." This is incautious. Mr. Laqueur may find support in his unwillingness to re-read the novels of Spielhagen, Freytag, or Raabe from the 1860's, or even the poetry of Storm or Conrad Ferdinand Meyer; but Dehmel and Liliencron and the Rilke of the *Cornet* and the *Stundenbuch* were writing in the 1890's, and Fontane's *Effi Briest* (1895) and *Der Stechlin* (1898) compare favorably with any novel written in the 1920's. Nor would it be hard to make a good list for the 1960's (Grass? Böll? Siegfried Lenz? Bobrowski?). But in general the point is sound, as are Mr. Laqueur's comments on the richness of the visual arts and of the architecture of the Weimar period.

As for the film, compared with the wretched German products that are shown yearly at the Berlin Film Festival, those of the 1920's seem evidence of a golden age. Mr. Laqueur does not approach the German cinema with the portentousness that inspired Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler*. "It is dangerous," he warns, "to read too much into the content of the films of the period; whether they provide a key to the depths of the German soul, let alone to subsequent trends in German politics, is at best a moot point." What is beyond doubt is that Weimar was as much the age of Fritz Lang and Marlene Dietrich and Richard Tauber as it was of its thinkers, and the works of these artists, which still have the power to entertain and move us, are additional testimony to the cultural abundance of the period.

TO STUDENTS of German history Weimar has always had a special fascination, partly, one supposes, because it is so easy to regard it as doomed and death-laden. In the 1960's this interest spread to a wider public, for, at a time when large numbers of the American intelligentsia were disaffected with their political leadership, a parallel seemed obvious. It was, Mr. Laqueur holds in his concluding pages, a parallel of limited value, as most parallels with the past are. Weimar is a part of history, in which, as one of the principal cradles of cultural modernism, its place is secure. The combination of elements that produced its peculiar genius is not likely to recur.

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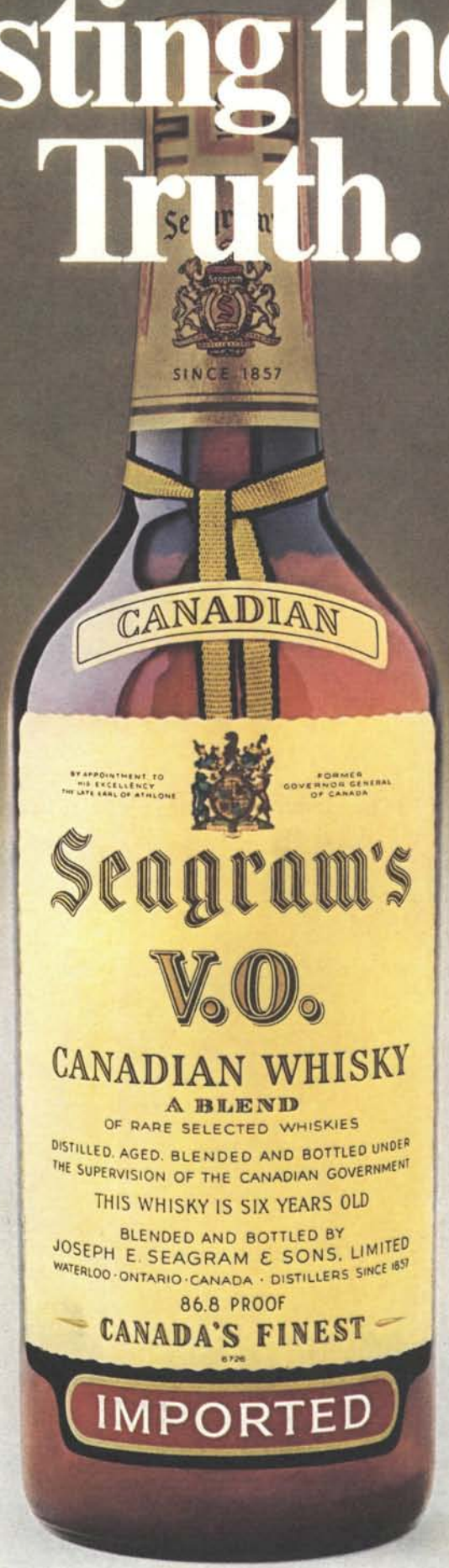
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